

KNITTERS
IN·THE·SVN

OCTAVE·THANET

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KNITTERS IN THE SUN

BY

OCTAVE THANET

O, fellow, come, the song we had last night. —
Mark it, Cesario; it is old and plain;
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
Do use to chant it.

TWELFTH NIGHT, *Act II., Scene 4.*



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TO MY MOTHER.



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KNITTERS IN THE SUN.



THE OGRE OF HA HA BAY.

THE Saguenay steamboat reaches Ha Ha Bay in the early morning. It was just three o'clock on a July morning, when Susan and I took our first look at the bay. I had been trying to marry Susan for ten years, and we went up the Saguenay on our wedding journey. I have but to shut my eyes to see Ha Ha Bay now. Early as the hour was, the pale light of that high latitude brought out the scene with something the same quality of tone as an etching: the desolate cliffs guarding the entrance to the Saguenay; the hills lower, and green with oats and barley about the placid pool where the mysterious river widens into the bay; the two quaint villages facing each other across the water, with their half foreign picturesqueness of stone walls and steep red roofs; a pier like a long, black arm thrust forth from St. Alphonse; a huge sawmill over at

Grand Baie; and four full-rigged ships at anchor below the mill. The tide was out in the flats, and the smell of salt water was in the air.

Behind St. Alphonse some freak of nature has heaped a mass of granite rocks, then, repenting, tried to hide them with a frugal verdure of grass and stunted pines. The hotel is built on the rocks. Broad piazzas made it imposing, and whitewash, conspicuous. Not only has St. Alphonse the hotel of the bay, it is also the steamboat landing. Perhaps the boat's coming but four times a week, and being the sole means of intercourse, outside of horse-flesh, between the village and the world, accounts for the presence of all the inhabitants on the pier. Certainly, the traffic of the region in wood and blueberries could scarcely bring such numbers out of their beds at three o'clock in the morning. The wood and the blueberry boxes — looking exactly like wee coffins — were piled on either side. One man, with a wheelbarrow, was hauling the wood into the boat's hold, superintended by three officers, all talking at once. Half a dozen, having nothing better than their arms, were carrying the blueberries on board. At the same time, sacks of flour and barrels and boxes of merchandise kept emerging from below, the own-

ers of which helped the confusion by running about after their goods, while the unwieldy vehicles of the region, the voitures à la planche, were recklessly plunging, backing, and turning through the crowd amid a mighty clamor of French patois. One of the horses fixed my attention. He was a splendid creature, a big gray, with the great curved neck and powerful flanks of a charger on a Greek frieze. The muscles stood out like whipcord, as he reared and pawed in the air. His driver, a slender young habitant, took his antics very coolly, merely saying at intervals, in a conversational tone, "Sois sage, Bac," as though to an unruly baby.

"I should like to drive after *that* horse," said my wife. Her voice is softer than a flute, and she is slender and graceful, with an appealing look in her hazel eyes, and the sweetest smile in the world; but I have never met a woman so fond of risking her neck. Before I knew what was happening she had called, "Venez ici, cocher!" and the gray brute was kicking at my elbow. Naturally, nothing remained but to climb into the voiture à la planche. These "carriages on a plank" are simply "buckboard wagons" with two seats, the further one of which is protected by a hood and a leather apron. Susan was charmed.

“He has spirit, your horse,” said she in French. “Oway, Madame,” said the driver, politely turning in his seat. “Oway,” I had already discovered, is Canadian French for “Oui.” The driver was young. He was clad in a decent coarse suit of gray, and wore the soft felt hat and curious boots of undyed leather, tied with a thong, which every habitant wears. His features were of the delicate habitant type; but his fair skin, blue eyes, and reddish yellow hair hinted a mixed race. He was not tall, and was slightly round-shouldered. The only thing noticeable in his appearance was an air of deep dejection, not lightened by so much as a smile of courtesy. He spoke no English, — almost no one speaks English in the St. John country, — but though dejected he was not reticent, and we had his whole history before we were well into the village. His name was Isadore Clovis. He lived in the village with his uncle, Xavier Tremblay. That was his uncle’s house — pointing to a cottage of logs covered with birch bark, which stood close to a substantial stone house. He, himself, was not married, he never should be. His father and mother had been long dead. He was the youngest of a large family; the habitants had large families, “Oway, M’sieu’.” “And that of my mother was of the largest,” said he; “the

good God sent her twenty-six. But twelve, fifteen, that is common.”

“And did they all live?” I asked, while Susan remarked in English that she had never heard of anything so horrible.

“Mais, non, M’sieu’,” said Isadore, “all are dead but six; they live in Chicontimi, nine miles from here. I live here, I with my uncle. Regard my uncle, Madame, M’sieu’!”

His finger indicated the roof of the stone house. Peering over the ridgepole was a bushy white head, set with no visible neck upon a pair of very broad shoulders. Hair standing out in spikes all over, a stubbly gray beard, and prodigious eyebrows imparted an aspect of grotesque ferocity to features forbidding enough of themselves, weatherbeaten, rugged, scored by innumerable lines and dents. The attire of this extraordinary bust was a plaided red flannel shirt, torn at the throat, and thus displaying a hairy chest. Altogether, he might have given an orang-outang the odds for ugliness.

“He owns both houses,” said Isadore, “he is rich; he has many farms and a *fromagerie* and *crêmerie*.”

“He is fortunate,” said Susan, who likes to be pleasant with people, and to praise their belongings; “it is a good house, a comfortable house. Does he live there?”

Isadore threw a lustreless eye over the house,

saying slowly, "No one lives there, Madame, no one has ever lived there; it is because of his vow."

"His vow?"

"Oway, Madame. He made a vow before M. Pingat, M. le notaire, M. Rideau, M. Vernet, those, that he would never go into his new house until he should marry a maiden of twenty. It was twenty-five years ago, but he has never gone into the house since."

"How old is he?"

"He is eighty years old, Madame; he is a very strong man. Every day he climbs the roof, so."

"Dear me," cried Susan, "this is most interesting! he has never married, then?"

"No, Madame; once he was affianced to a maiden of twenty, she had but one eye; but she fell in the river and was drowned."

"But in his youth?"

"Once he was affianced, Madame," said Isadore; "he was then fifty-five, and not long come from Quebec. Madame does not know the widow Guion; she is still handsome; but then, when she was twenty, there was no one in the parish to compare with her. My uncle would marry her, and the affair was arranged, and my uncle had built the house; it was nearly finished, when, behold, she will not marry my uncle, she will marry Pierre Guion. Then all the

world made jests about my uncle, who, as one can see, is not handsome. And it was at M. François Pouliot's house that they were laughing, and saying that my uncle would frighten any woman away, he was so ugly, and my uncle overheard it, passing by, and came in, and swore an oath before them all, that he would never go into his new house until he should marry a maiden of twenty. 'I can get the best of them to marry me, for as ugly as I am,' said he. But it was twenty-five years first."

"Has he succeeded, then?" Isadore, leaning forward, gathered up the reins.

"Oway, Madame," he said, in a low tone, "he has succeeded. Next month he will marry a maiden of twenty, and move into his new house." By force of habit Isadore called the twenty-five year old house "the new house;" doubtless it had been "the old house" and "the new house" to him from childhood. "He left the house just as it was," said Isadore, "the wood and shavings are all scattered about the floors, where the carpenters left them. He had the carpenters board up the windows, that was all. *Bac, en avant!*"

We had turned and were ascending a hill. Half-way up Isadore stopped to point again. "See, Madame, the cottage of the widow Guion." It was a mere morsel of a house, the

unpainted boards of which were made a better protection against the weather by a covering of birch bark. In the little yard the peas were in flower, and a few hollyhocks reared their heads above the beet leaves and lettuce. A barefooted man was raking coals out of the open-air oven which stood to one side of a pile of brush. "C'est le beau-frère de Madame," said Isadore, "c'est un fou, mais bon naturel, pas méchant. From here, Madame can see the hotel plainly."

We looked, not at the hotel, but at the road. Could that infatuated Canadian mean to drive up a sheer rock, slippery with mud, wider but hardly better than a goat path?

"Attendez," said I, "do you mean to take us up *that* way, that?"

"Oway, M'sieu'," replied Isadore, tranquilly, "without doubt. Bac is accustomed to it. Behold! Bac, en avant!" With the word, he leaped lightly over the shafts, and Bac and he went up the hill on a run. It is the pace of the country; up hill and down, they make their horses gallop at the top of their speed. I don't know why; I suppose they like it. At any rate, Susan did; she was enchanted.

"Wasn't it lovely, Maurice?" she cried, as Isadore pulled Bac up before the hotel piazzas; "do give the man something handsome."

I gave him fifty cents, which he said was more than he deserved; and we both watched him rattle down the hill at a rate which threatened to break every bone in his body. Then, having seen him emerge unshattered, we entered the hotel. There are no such inns in the States. Nothing could be more primitive than the house and its furnishing. The walls were unplastered, the woodwork unpainted; the women of the village had spun, woven, and dyed the strips of gay carpet on the pine floors. We had tallow candles in our bedrooms, a candle to a room. If we wanted a maid we went out into the hall and called her. A bath was a perilous luxury, the one bath tub of the house being too large for the doors, so that it must be emptied before it could be tilted on one side and trundled out of the room, which operation usually ended in flooding both the bather's chamber and the room below, not counting a few stray rivulets likely to meander into the hall. Yet, I have been less comfortable in houses with grand names. Everything was scrupulously clean; Madame gave us a capital dinner and Monsieur kept most excellent wines; nor is it everywhere that one can eat salmon of his own catching. Moreover, it is pleasant to live among a people so simple, kindly, and cheerful as the French Canadians.

All the rigor of a harsh climate and a hard life cannot quench their amiable vivacity or that engaging politeness which flings a sort of Southern grace over their bare Northern homes. We grew fond of the villagers. To them the hotel was the centre of festivity; were there not a bowling alley, and a billiard room, and in the parlor a piano? Nightly the village magnates would assemble in the alley and bowl with tremendous energy and both hands. We came to know them all, the doctor, the notary, the rich fur merchant, the various shopkeepers and farmers.

Of them all none interested us more than the widow Guion and her daughter. The widow was a tall woman, whose figure had been moulded on such fine lines that a life of coarse toil had not been able to spoil them. Trouble had bleached her thick hair and wrinkled her face, and the weather had browned her skin, but she was as straight as an arrow and still had splendid eyes and a profile worth drawing. We often saw her in her garden working like a man. Indoors, she would wash her hands, tie a clean apron about her waist, and sing over her spinning. The singing was for the fool. She was very kind to him and devoted to her daughter. She was also neat, honest, and industrious; but she was not popular in the

village; they said that she had an imperious temper and was unsocial. Mélanie, the daughter, was one of the maids at the hotel, a tall, handsome, black-haired, fair-skinned girl, who revived the traditions of her mother's beauty. One day something occurred to make us notice Mélanie. We were sitting on the rocks overhanging the village. It was that most peaceful hour of the day, the hour before sunset. The west was in a glow that turned the tin spire of the little church into silver; the mountains cast purple shadows over the bay; and the water was a steel mirror with rippling splashes of shade. We could hear the lowing of the cows returning homeward, and the faint tinkle of bells, and the voices of mothers calling their children. "How peaceful it is," said Susan softly, "and they seem so pastoral and childlike, like people in poems. One can hardly imagine any one's being very unhappy here."

Perhaps she was thinking of our own past; certainly we had been miserable enough, before we drifted into this calm harbor. Just then a man and woman, coming along the path beneath, halted, out of sight, but not out of hearing. The man was speaking: "No, I cannot bear it. See, thou art all I have, thou; I have loved thee all my life. Ah, mon dieu, how couldst thou promise!" Now I grant that we

ought to have risen at once, and gone away; but I am not relating what we ought to have done, but what we did do, which was to sit still and listen with all our ears. The woman answered. The other's voice was rough and thick from passion: but hers was very gentle and quiet.

"I will tell thee, Isadore," she said (Susan pinched my arm); "I came here to tell. Thou knowest maman has a great opinion of M. Tremblay, who has been her only friend, though he has so little reason."

"It was but that he might marry *thee*," cried Isadore, "curse his crafty head!"

"May be," answered the woman wearily, "though I think not; but he has been ever kind to us, since before I was born. And maman was glad, very glad, when he would marry me."

"And was it *that*" —

"Hush! no, my friend. It was hard to refuse her who has lived so wearying a life and had so great disappointments, but I thought of thee. Then — then — she told me. Isadore, maman — maman is going blind!" The voice which was so steady broke, but in a second it went on quietly as before. "It is that, my friend, that made me promise. M. le docteur says if she will go to Montreal to the great doctor there, he will make her eyes well again.

But it will cost a great, great sum of money, two hundred dollars. And M. Tremblay has promised to give it her, and more, besides, when I marry him. And if she does not go, she must become quite blind. Already she cannot spin the yarn even, and when she feels the lumps afterwards, she weeps." There was a sound like a groan. "Do not weep, my friend," she continued, "it cannot be for long. He is so very old."

This practical view of the matter hardly seemed to console the lover, who burst out: "Thou dost not understand it, thou! Ah, no," —he swore a great oath, with a sob in his throat,— "I will not endure it. Listen, I have five dollars. I will sell Bac. We will go to Quebec and be married. Ah, think, m'amie, thou and I."

There was a break filled by a very pretty sound, then the soft voice again. "Ah, no, Isadore, thou must not kiss me. It cannot be. I have sworn before the image of the blessed Virgin to marry him. And, beside — oh, Isadore, how could I leave *her* behind, to grow blind — without me!" Isadore did not answer. The vesper bell rang from the church tower. "My friend," said the girl, "I must go. I can never see thee alone again. Wilt thou not forgive me, first?"

“I might kill him,” said the man.

“And be hanged for it?” answered his practical sweetheart, “how would that help?”

“He would be dead,” said the desperate Isadore, “he could not marry thee. Mon dieu, it would help much!”

“But thy soul, it would burn forever!”

“It would not burn,” said Isadore, practical in his turn, “I would repent and confess to the priest and he would absolve me.”

“But he could not bring thee back to life. Oh, Isadore, promise me thou wilt put away such thoughts! Thou art cruel, thou!”

“Ah, dost thou feel what is tearing my heart?” cried poor Isadore.

“Look at me,” said the woman, “dost thou remember my face a month ago? I cannot speak when I suffer, like thee; I can only bear it.” The man was kissing her again, and crying quite openly. “Isadore,” said she, “I must go. Bid me farewell. No, do not hold me. See, thou hast often complained that I never will kiss thee. This once.”

I think they were both crying now. We were ashamed to listen longer and got up, but in a few moments a woman’s shape flitted round the curve and passed us. She was tall and had black hair; we both recognized Mélanie. “Oh, poor things!” cried my dear wife,

“and we are so happy; can't we help them, Maurice?” I said that we might try. Anyhow, it wouldn't cost more than a picture. “So Mélanie is the old ogre's victim, is she?” said I; “what possesses her mother?”

In truth, Tremblay, in the village eyes, was worse than an ogre. All the world knew him to be a miser to his nail points, a cruel, surly old reprobate. He was a heretic and a scoffer at the saints. He had amassed (doubtless by baleful means) what was great wealth in that simple community. Most of the villagers were in his debt; nor was this the worst, he had possessed himself of all the secrets of the parish. How? The doctor talked about gossip; but there was a sinister theory more in favor. Under the confessional floor, in the church, was a space between the timbers large enough for a dog to lie, and Xavier, strong and supple, in spite of his eighty years, could curl his short body into a dog's compass; the abominable wickedness would only give a zest to the act, for the old infidel.

“But what secrets can you have?” I said to the doctor, “they can't be very bad.”

“There is a black spot in the human heart, everywhere, Monsieur,” answered the doctor. Wherever the black spot, Xavier was sure to put his wicked old finger on it and gibe at the

victim's wincing. Then he would creep away, chuckling, to the ground, or, may be, to his pet devil, for St. Alphonse firmly believed in such a familiar.

My own acquaintance with the ogre was limited to one interview. I found him unloading blueberries, on the wharf, his cart and a sorry skeleton of a horse beside him. A nearer view did not give one a better opinion of his looks. He was of low stature, with enormously long arms, and disproportionately broad shoulders. I asked him a question; in French, of course.

“Me spik Englis,” croaked the old sinner.

He insisted on speaking a kind of mongrel English in answer to my French, and we did not make much advance. By and by another man appeared and I tried to talk to him. Instantly Xavier's lean fingers were tapping my shoulder.

“He no spik Englis tall,” said the exasperating monster.

“Tant mieux,” said I, “at least I shall understand him!”

“Mais peut-être, M'sieu',” he retorted grinning, “he no vill undertands *you!*”

I surrendered, bought a box of berries (at an awful price), and left him leering like a gargoyle. Recalling that leer, I pitied Mélanie.

What a husband for a girl of twenty! Susan and I talked the affair over, discussing half a dozen plans of rescue. The most obvious was to go to the widow. We went. Susan broached the subject, after a diplomatic purchase of hollyhocks. She spoke of Mélanie, of her beauty, her pleasant ways, of our interest in her. We had heard that she was to be married; might we offer our sincere wishes for her happiness?

“Oway, Madame,” the widow replied, with a certain ominous contraction of the muscles of the mouth, “she will be happy; M. Tremblay has a good heart.”

“But,” said Susan, “pardon, Madame — it is our great interest in Mélanie — is not M. Tremblay very old?”

We were in the garden, all four of us, for the idiot brother-in-law was there also, piling brush; Madame had been hoeing; she struck her hoe smartly on the ground and rested her elbows on the handle, her chin on her hands, and so eyed us grimly.

“Without doubt, Madame,” said she; “quay donc? He will die the sooner. In ten, in five years she will be a widow, rich, free.”

“Consider those same five years, Madame,” I cried, “the trouble, the misery, perhaps.”

Her lip curled. “M’sieu’ has heard the talk

of the village. They are imbeciles, they. M. Tremblay is a miser. Bah, look around you, M'sieu'. This house, that wood, for a nothing, a few vegetables—from a miser! Look at him," pointing to the idiot, "those clothes are from M. Tremblay, from the miser! In the house is a fiddle, one of the most beautiful. It is for him. M. Tremblay gave it him. For why? can he play? Mon dieu, no; but it pleases him to make a noise, and M. Tremblay bought it. When Mélanie was a little child he always bought her things, snowshoes, a toboggan, a doll from Quebec. No child in St. Alphonse has a doll like that. A miser! bah, lies of the devil!"

"But he is a wicked man, cruel, harsh," I persisted.

"Never to us, M'sieu', never, never!"

"He is a heretic."

"Et M'sieu'?" said the widow.

"I am not to marry a Catholic. But he is worse, he scoffs at the saints and does not believe in the good God himself."

"The good God knows better," said Madame Guion placidly.

I tried another tack. "But Mélanie may love some one else."

"M'sieu' means Isadore Clovis," said the widow, drawing her tall figure to its full height,

and though I am a big fellow, her eyes were nearly level with mine. "Eh bien, I, too, have loved a young man, M'sieu'. It was twenty-five years ago, and M. Tremblay would marry me, but I was a fool, I: my heart was set on a young man of this parish, tall, strong, handsome. I quarreled with all my relations, I married him, M'sieu'. Within a month of our wedding day he broke my arm, twisting it to hurt me. He was the devil. Twice, but for his brother, he would have killed me. Jules is strong, though he has no wits; he pulled him off. See, M'sieu'," flinging the hoe aside to push the hair off her temples, "this he did with his stick; and this," baring her arm, "with his knife. But I was a fool, I forgave him and worked for him. He would do nothing but play cards and drive horses and drink, drink, drink. His grandfather was an Englishman and drank himself to death. The English are like that. And I—I forgave him and made myself old and wrinkled and black working for money for him. Then he would laugh at my ugly face and praise the village girls' looks. He had a soul of mud! But I forgave that, too. Then my children were born, and he beat *them*. Then I forgave no more, my heart was like coals of fire. Attendez, M'sieu', I have the mother's heart, I love my children,

yet I was glad, I, when they died and were safe from *him*! Figure, then, what kind of father he was! Only Mélanie lived. The others would cry, cry; but Mélanie did not cry, and she would never speak to him, her father. There was reason: God knows what women have to suffer, and He takes vengeance. He, that coward, was afraid of Mélanie, a little baby, because she would not speak to him. He tried, many times, to make her, but no, she would never speak, and she was three years old when he died. A horse kicked him and killed him, a horse that he was beating!"

The fool had dropped his sticks and was staring at her piteously, alarmed at her gestures and her angry voice. He ran up to her and stroked her hand, uttering a mournful, inarticulate sound.

"Ce n'est rien, Jules," said the widow smiling on him, "sois tranquille." Jules smiled, too, and nodded his head, then slunk back to his task. "Do you understand, M'sieu', now," said the widow, "why I will not have Mélanie marry a young man?"

"But Isadore is so good," said Susan, coming to my aid, "he would not be cruel to Mélanie."

Madame Guion laughed harshly. "He?" she shouted, "he? ma foy! I think no. My Mélanie could lift him with the one arm. Al-

ways, she has taken care of him. Look you: when they are children, she puts on his snowshoes; and when he cries for the cold, she puts on him her mittens; and she will fight the boys that tease him because he is Tremblay's nephew. Always, she takes care of him."

"But, Madame," said Susan in her gentle voice, "if they have loved each other from childhood, how hard for them to be separated now."

"It would be harder," said the widow in quite another tone, "to marry him and repent all the years after. Love, it is pleasant, but marriage, that is another pair of sleeves. Tiens, Madame, regard the women of this village. Without doubt Madame has observed them. They work, work, work; they scrub, they cook, they weave, they spin, they knit, they make the clothes; one has not time to say one's prayers; and every year a new mouth to fill,—mon dieu, one mouth? two at a blow, perhaps! That makes one ugly and old. If Mélanie marries Isadore Clovis she will be like these others, so poor, so tired, so ugly; and there will be the children and her poor old blind mother cannot help her. Ah, mon dieu, I will not have such a fate come to my beautiful one!"

Then I spoke, struggling after a short cut through the situation. I offered to pay for her

journey to Montreal and to do something for Isadore.

The widow's face stiffened; plainly she suspected the Greeks' gifts. "And why should M'sieu' incommode himself for my eyes?" said she.

I thought I had better let Susan do the rest of the talking. Her tact is equal to any demand. "It is for Mélanie, too, you understand," said she, "I am fond of Mélanie. And see, Madame, we are two lovers, my husband and I" (with an adorable blush), "and we are very happy; we should like to make two other lovers happy. Is not that what the good God intends we should do with happiness, share it?"

The widow Guion smiled a faint and wintry smile, saying: "Truly, M'sieu' has cause to be happy. But look you," she continued rapidly, "M'sieu' does not understand. It is not for myself. To see Mélanie rich, content, I would be blind, deaf, *dumb!*" At this climax of calamities she spread her hands out to the sky, and the fool began to moan. "Mélanie will be happier with M. Tremblay, — not now, in the end. And Isadore, too, he will be happier; his uncle will then give him a farm, — he has told me; he will marry, he will content himself, he is a slight creature. It is not for him to marry

Mélanie. For see, Madame, she has always had better than the other children. Often, I have worked all night that she might wear a pretty robe to the church. She has been to the convent at Chicoutimi; she has accomplishments: she can embroider, she can make flowers with wool, she can play on the piano. One can see she is superior to the other girls of the village. M. Tremblay will do everything for her; he will take her to Quebec. Ah, Madame, it is because I love my little one that I would give her to M. Tremblay."

Evidently we could hope nothing from Mélanie's mother. Simultaneously Susan and I gave it up, and Susan covered our retreat with an order for beets, to be delivered at the hotel.

But I thought that I understood the situation better. I believed Madame Guion told us the truth: she was only seeking her daughter's happiness. She had an intense but narrow nature, and her life of toil, hard and busy though it was, being also lonely and quiet, rather helped than hindered brooding over her sorrows. Her mind was of the true peasant type, the ideas came slowly and were tenacious of grip. Love had been ruin to her. It meant heartbreak, bodily anguish, the torture of impotent anger, and the bitterest humiliation. Therefore, her fixed determination was to save

Mélanie from its delusions. And because her own bloom had withered under sordid hardships, she yearned with passionate longing to ward them off her child. These two desires had come to fill her whole mind. Old Xavier offered to gratify both. Besides, he was the giver of whatever small comforts had brightened her poverty; she was grateful, and it is quite possible that she wanted to make amends for the past. As for those aspects of the marriage which revolted us, privations and drudgery blunt sentiment in women even more effectually than in men. Madame Guion felt no horror in such a union simply because she could not see any. These conclusions solved the problem of the widow's motives, but they did not help, in the least, to change them, or to make her more friendly towards Isadore. We tried the young people, next. I talked with Isadore, and Susan with Mélanie. It was all plain sailing with the man. He poured out his woes to me, on the way to Lake Ravel, with true Gallic effusion. His uncle had been kind to him, after a gruff and silent fashion, when a lad, but now, grown to manhood, he found himself frankly despised.

“He has said of me, ‘C’est un vrai blêche,’” cried Isadore, grinding his teeth. “Bac, arrêtes donc!” The horse, plunging at the sight of

a fallen tree, was calmed instantly; I could not help admiring the lad's mastery of the animal.

"He would not say that, if he had seen you drive Bac when he was frightened," I said.

"It is nothing," said Isadore; "I am good to Bac and he knows it, that is all. *He* taught me to be kind to animals. He buys old horses that are beaten. M'sieu' has seen the last, Charlay, a sight to make fear. He will not be so long, he will be fat, lazy, like the others. He says: 'Dame, I can get work out of them, c'est bon marché!' But it is not for that he loves all animals. He loves the fool, also; but all good people he hates, and he curses the saints, he is so wicked," said Isadore, piously crossing himself.

Certainly his uncle knew of his attachment. "He is glad that I suffer," said Isadore. "M'sieu', I speak to you with the heart open; sometimes I think that I will kill myself, but Mélanie then will weep, and I must burn, myself, forever, also. No, I will go away, she shall never see me again. I will go to Chicontimi!"

Chicontimi being barely nine miles away rather blunted the point of this tragic threat; but the poor fellow's grief and rage were real enough. There was no question about his willingness to be helped. He burst into tears

and insisted upon embracing me over the front seat. He would do anything, he would go anywhere, he was my slave for life. Then he cried again.

Mélanie, as the French say, was more difficult. At first she could hardly believe in Susan's offers. Finally convinced, the poor girl grew quite white with emotion; all she did, however, was to lift a fold of Susan's gown, press it tightly between her two hands to her heart, and then let it drop; — an odd gesture, which, nevertheless, Susan found infinitely expressive.

But she could not be swerved from her purpose. She had sworn before the Virgin; to retreat now would break her mother's heart; moreover, the marriage would be the best thing for Isadore, since M. Tremblay, who never broke his word, had promised to give his nephew a farm on his wedding day. That Isadore might reject the gift did not occur to Mélanie; the habitants have no morbid scruples of delicacy — well, I do not know that it would have occurred to Isadore, either.

Susan would have tried to show her the sure unhappiness in such a marriage, but her first words were stopped by the girl's quivering mouth and the miserable appeal of her eyes.

“Oh, do not tell it me, Madame,” she cried,

“I tell myself until I cannot sleep any more at night. I work, work, all day, to be tired ; but at night it is only that my bones ache, the thoughts will not stop. I cannot eat or sleep, and always there is the same hard pain *here*.” She touched, not her heart, but her throat. “Some day, it will choke me, I think,” said she. Yet she spoke of Tremblay without bitterness, saying: “He was very good to me when I was young. For why should he be good at all? All the world has been unkind to him. When he was a little child, his own mother did not love him because he was ugly. He had a great misfortune in his youth, also ; what, I do not know, but he will often say to *maman*, ‘Beware of doing services to people, *Madame*. When I was young I was a fool. I did kindnesses, I would be loved. Men are like wolves, they bite the hand that feeds them. Be feared, *Madame*, that is best.’ He makes himself feared. What he says, he does. He has vowed to marry a maiden of twenty, and he will keep his vow! Look you, the mother gave him the key of the fields,¹ he will marry the daughter ; he makes two blows with a stone.”

Meanwhile the matter was the absorbing topic at the Bay, our unlucky efforts to assist

¹ *Donner le clef des champs*, a satirical expression for a dismissal.

the lovers being as much common property as Isadore's despair or Mélanie's filial submission. This was just a trifle embarrassing, since we could hardly buy a candle that a multitude of volunteer counselors did not troop about us; or row on the Bay without the boatman's inquiring anxiously what we meant to do next. Not a mother's son had a suggestion to offer; but they all showed a cheerful confidence in our ingenuity, and were amazingly sympathetic.

While this went on, I was seeing Xavier daily. Sometimes he would be walking, attended by a starving retinue of curs, sometimes driving Charlay; always he would grin at me in his gargoyle fashion; but our acquaintance got no further until the day I ran against him on the pier, talking English to Susan. Susan was talking English also.

"Why not?" was her comment, "he likes it. He is going to show us over his crêmerie, this afternoon. You know I have an interest in a crêmerie, myself — and by good luck I've been through it."

We spent three mortal hours in old Xavier's creamery, Susan admiring things right and left. Somewhere about Tremblay's porcupine nature must have been a soft spot of vanity, and my clever wife found it, for actually he looked almost human while he talked to her, and the

grin that seemed carved on his face was softened into an uncouth smile.

“Susan,” said I, “you are an unprincipled woman, flattering that clown!”

“Maurice,” she answered gravely, “he interests me greatly.”

The following day, being Sunday, we went to church. We liked the little church of St. Alphonse, with its walls covered with mortar decorated by laths in wavy lines, to give a foothold to future plaster; its pillars hewn out of pine logs; its echoing floors; its altogether dreadful stations and images, and its poor little tawdry altars. Whenever mass was celebrated a dingy and crumpled flock of surplices crowded the chancel. It was worth a long journey to see the easy attitudes of the choristers, as they lounged in their stalls or shambled through the ritual. They all had colds, and expectorated with artless freedom. Choristers and organist generally started together on the chants; but soon the voices would lose the key and wander helplessly off, amid a howling mob of discords, while the organist was sternly plodding her way through her notes, leaving them to their fate. Withal there was no irreverence; on the contrary, a devout attention. I used to watch the people telling their beads or kneeling at their prayers, and question whether their life

seemed to them the innocent and stupid affair that it seemed to me. Thus gazing, this Sunday, I was aware that the aisle was illuminated by a blaze of red satin, followed by a rusty black gown,—Mélanie and her mother. Mélanie's gay frock was trimmed with cheap white lace. Susan called it a "nightmare" later, and it certainly did suggest the splendors of the chorus in a comic opera; but, all the same, it was amazingly becoming, and the girl's pallor and troubled eyes only enhanced her beauty. No wonder the young men stared at her and the women whispered.

The curé preached a good sermon enough; but I could have wished a less appropriate subject than the sin of broken vows. Mélanie sat like a statue, hardly seeming to hear, her beads dangling from her limp fingers. The only visible portion of the widow's shape was her back, but I fancied a grim complacency in the way she sat bolt upright and held her chin in the air. After mass we had the excitement of a shower. There was the customary huddling under the church porch, while the fortunate owners of "buckboards" drove up, in turn, and stored their womankind on the sheltered back seats. I had a glimpse of Bac's tossing mane among the horses, and saw Isadore standing up in the "buckboard," looking for Mélanie. I

heard him offer his vehicle to Madame Guion. Simultaneously, old Xavier climbed up the church steps, in his ordinary garb of homespun, with plenty of mud on his boots. His long arm extended itself under two or three intervening shoulders, and jerked the widow's shawl. What he said was inaudible, but in response, she gathered up her skirts above her white stockings, took her daughter by the hand, and strode out to the *voiture à la planche*. Poor Isadore was already at Bac's head smiling. He assisted the women in and buttoned the apron over their knees. Just as he was about to follow them his uncle's long arm unceremoniously thrust him aside and the old man climbed into his seat. The young fellow stood like one stupefied. His fair skin turned a deep red.

"En avant!" bawled Xavier. The voice roused Isadore. Bac flung his heels into the air and was off, Isadore after him, screaming "Take care! Bac will go for none but me! Stop, or he will kill you." The old man's answer was the whistle of a whip. I don't think that Xavier meant to touch the horse, it was a mere bit of a bravado, but by chance the lash did fillip Bac's flank. Up he went, like a shot, pawing the air; then round in a furious half circle. Xavier pulled, but he might as well have tried to hold a whirlwind. I had started at the same instant, and was abreast of Isadore.

“C’est mon affaire,” he cried, jumping at the bits. I caught the animal on the other side. For a moment I expected that he would trample the life out of both of us; he had the strength of ten horses. But Isadore talked away as composedly as if in the stable yard: “Arrêtes, donc, Bac; sois sage! s-s-sh! Why dost thou make such a time, little fool?” And actually, that raving devil of a brute stopped, trembling, and rubbed his nose against the habitant’s breast.

“M’sieu’, mon oncle,” said Isadore calmly, “have the goodness to debark.¹ Bac is not safe for any one but me to drive.”

The old man looked at his nephew and grinned. Quite composedly he got down, and stood with his hands on his hips while Isadore sprang lightly into the *voiture à la planche*. Neither of the women spoke: the widow looked scared, Mélanie’s eyes were shining. Isadore gravely touched his hat to me and drove away, old Xavier wrinkling his cheeks over his eyes in a deeper grin. “Bah,” he muttered, “he can drive the little one,” and stumped off without a word of acknowledgment to me.

Susan, when I told her the story, held that it

¹ The habitants on the Saguenay and St. Lawrence always use *debarquer* for *descendre*, probably because they have so much to do with boats.

was very encouraging. She thought that she understood the *mot d'enigme* about Tremblay.

“ You see, Maurice,” said she, “ he is awfully vain, that is all. Did n't you ever notice that deformed people always are vain, poor things? Tremblay, now, has a consuming desire to be noticed. I think that at first he tried to win people's affection, and I imagine he met with some cruel disappointments. He had a dismal childhood, and you know, yourself, about the widow Guion. I believe he cared more for her than he will admit. See how kind he has been to her. He may pretend all sorts of mean motives for his actions, but there the kind actions are. You see, Maurice, now he tries to make people fear him, it is the same vanity, only twisted a little. He takes as much pains to appear wicked and cruel as other people do to appear good. Why, he started that story about the confessional, himself. Depend upon it, it is nothing but his vanity makes him so obstinately bent on marrying a girl of twenty.” She had a pretty theory about his having been disappointed in Isadore. “ He took the child to bring up,” said she, “ hoping, I feel sure, though he may not have owned the hope to himself, that the boy would be on his side, would share his hatred of mankind, and grow up in his own pattern. If Isadore had been a

bold, fierce sort of a character, I believe the old man would have grown to love him; but from the first the boy was taken up by the village people, and he has all their ways of thinking. Then, besides, he is such a mild, gentle, inefficient seeming fellow that Tremblay can't endure it. But I fancy he has misjudged Isadore, and he is beginning to see it. He would be glad."

I did n't pretend to decide whether my wife was right, nor do I now; but this is what happened. One day I came out on the piazza to find the two, Xavier and Susan, talking earnestly. He gave me a nod, saying, "Madame does not approve of me, M'sieu'; she thinks I marry quite too young a wife."

"I am of Madame's opinion," said I.

Old Xavier looked at Susan's pretty, flushed cheeks not unkindly. "I care not for the people here," he said, "they are imbeciles, they; but her I find different. I wish to make myself understood. Look you, I want no wife; but they have made a mock of me in this parish. None shall make a mock of Xavier Tremblay. I say, 'Oway, I am old, I am ugly, all the same, bon gré, mal gré, I can marry a girl of twenty. I swear I will not go into my new house before.' Eh bien, the time goes on. I see a maiden of twenty, not beautiful, stupid,

but good, amiable. She has but one eye. Her people are unkind to her, often I see her weep. I have compassion; I am ugly, myself, Madame, and in my youth I knew what it was to weep. I think she will have a pleasanter life with old Tremblay. I speak kindly to her. We arrange it; she is not difficult. But she fell into the river and was drowned. Then goes a long time. Mélanie Guion has grown up. She pleases me, I think; the mother gave me the key of the fields. Good, I will marry the daughter. I will show these beasts that Xavier Tremblay can do what he pleases. But Madame can tell Mélanie that I will not be troublesome to her, and when I am dead she may marry Isadore; he can drive."

"You have shown that you can do as you please, Monsieur," said Susan: "to marry Mélanie will not show it any more; all the world knows that she has promised."

"But my vow, Madame, and my new house, I tire of living in my old house, c'est bien ennuyant."

There was our sticking, his preposterous old new house. He could not endure its standing reminder of his unfulfilled vow; the very sight of the walls which he might not enter chafed his vanity; to live in it had grown to be a corroding ambition, and the day whereon he

should step across those uncompleted, yet half ruined thresholds appeared to his imagination as the climax of his life. We asked too much, asking him to give up such visions.

All this while, Isadore was haunting the hotel, waiting with forlorn patience for a word or look from me. I repeated his uncle's words to him, whereupon he frowned darkly, and informed me that he longed to kill the old man; a confidence which disturbed me little, since I had my own opinion of Isadore's resolution.

By this time I was decidedly uncomfortable, myself. The way Isadore morally flopped over on me, as it were, had a subtle tinge of irritation in its helplessness. Why could not the fellow lift a hand for himself? and the villagers were worse. They maintained a maddening confidence in my astuteness. When the notary assured me that "the old fox" (meaning Tremblay) had met his match (meaning me), and Madame Pingât, the postmistress, gave me expressions of faith with my letters, and the blacksmith, winking very pleasantly, told me that he could guess what I was after, talking with old Xavier, I felt like swearing; and when Madame Vernet, who kept a "general shop," sold me a tea-kettle for a coffee-pot (one boiled quite as well as the other, she said, and the habitants used them indiscriminately) and

asked me if I did n't think it time to do something decisive, I went out and kicked an unoffending dog. Pretty soon, I felt that we should have to fly the country. Like Susan, I now rested my slender hope on getting out of the mess with credit upon old Xavier, and I was glad when an opportunity presented for another appeal. Isadore was to drive me to Lake Ravel for a day of trout fishing; but the evening previous he appeared with his arm in a sling. He had sprained his right wrist and offered his uncle's services in his stead, saying that the latter had a better horse than Charlay. So old Xavier took me to the lake. There I praised Isadore in French and English.

"You love 'im," said the old ogre, blinking at me with his keen eyes, "mais moi, me tink 'im vaurien; can mek wiz ze 'orse, notings of morre, non. Bah, for wy he laisse me tek 'is amie avays?" From which I gathered that he did not regard Isadore as a young man of spirit. In fact, I did n't think much of my habitant's spirit myself, but I had a suspicion that he wanted to be contradicted, that long silent instincts of blood were roused and speaking; perhaps, too, some faint emotions of compassion for the girl who had been fond of him as a child.

"Chut," he muttered, relapsing into his own

tongue, "I will not be troublesome to Mélanie. It is a good little girl. I should have been her father, I; I have thought that always."

"Make her your niece, then," said I, "that's next best."

"And never go into my new house? Mais non, ça ne va pas!"

There we stuck fast again. Briefly, I made another failure, and by the time evening came and we were in sight of the village I was decidedly out of temper. The first thing I noticed put my chagrin to flight. Little crowds of people going homewards gazed at us curiously, until, suddenly, Xavier shook his whip handle at a broken, lazy cloud of smoke and urged his horse into a gallop. Reason enough! the smoke was rising from the ruins of his "new house." A sorry sight they made; heaps of blackened and crumbling stone which had been walls, charred skeletons of joists, and distorted shapes of tin or iron showed the fierce power of the fire. Jets of flame were still playing with the remnants of window frames, and puffs of black smoke rose only to sink again and drift forlornly above the wreck. Men with buckets and blankets, women holding babies in their arms, and a crowd of children stood around talking shrilly. A kind of hush fell on the chatter as we drove up.

Everybody stared at old Xavier. His iron composure gave no clew to his feelings. "My stable," said old Xavier, "what of the horses?" A medley of voices explained that Isadore had saved the horses. If we were to believe the women, he had been a prodigy of valor. Xavier listened with his smirk that was uglier than a frown. "Where then is he, this brave fellow?" said he. Half a dozen boys started after Isadore.

I did not wait for his arrival. Seeing Susan standing a little to one side, I joined her. She told me about the fire. It seems that a party of tourists, coming and going by the morning's boat, had been shown through the village by Isadore and little Antoine Vernet. The gentlemen, who had somehow heard of old Xavier, expressed a curiosity to go into his house. They pulled the boards off a window and climbed in and roamed over the house. They were smoking, and there was a quantity of dry wood and shavings about. Little Antoine said that Isadore asked them to put out their cigars lest a spark should set these afire; but they did not appear to understand him. After they were gone, almost three hours, the fire broke out. The whole house seemed to flash into a blaze at once. When Isadore, brought back from the pier, arrived, it was all that he could

do to save the horses in the stable and the old house.

As Susan spoke, I saw Isadore and his uncle approaching, and, at the same moment, from the opposite direction, the widow Guion and Mélanie. Isadore's expression was completely concealed by streaks of smut, his dress was torn, and his hair disordered. Old Xavier was grinning. To them marched Madame Guion, dragging Mélanie after her. She did not so much as glance at us. Then I saw that she was livid with passion. "M'sieu," said she, in a voice hardly above a whisper, but holding the energy of a thunderbolt, "will you know who set fire to your new house?"

"Without doubt, Madame," replied Tremblay; and he stopped grinning.

The woman thrust out a long forefinger as she might have thrust a knife, crying, "Behold him!"

It was at Isadore that she stabbed with her hand, the finger tapping his breast. He recoiled, but answered boldly enough, "Madame, I do not understand."

"Comment?" said Xavier between his teeth.

"Oway, it is thou, Isadore Clovis," said Madame Guion, always in the same suppressed, vibrating tones, "that burned thy uncle's new house; I saw it, I, with these eyes. I tell it to

him and to these Americans, who think that I should have given my daughter to *thee!*”

Mélanie threw a piteous glance around. “Wait, *maman*,” she begged, “he will explain!”

“Peste,” growled old Xavier, “what have we here? Speak, *Madame*, you. Tell what you have seen.”

The widow released her daughter’s hand to have both her own free for dramatic action; she spoke rapidly, even fiercely.

“Behold, then, *M’sieu’*; I go, this morning, to buy a pair of boots for Jules, and I pass your new house. A window has the board hanging by the one nail. It is natural, is it not? I, a mother, wish to view the house where my daughter shall live. So I look in. Behold *Isadore*, your nephew, in the room. He splits boxes to pieces, chop! chop! with both arms, view you, he that pretends an arm in a sling. Then he goes out. I cannot see him, but I hear chop! chop! again. Then he comes back; he has, what think you? a kerosene can in his hands. He goes through the room. He does not come back. Then I go away. I think, ‘What makes he there?’ I cannot comprehend. A long time passes. It arrives that I hear them crying the alarm. Your house burns, *M’sieu’!* I run quickly. I am there

among the first. They break down the door but the fire jumps out, *pouf!* in their faces. I run to my window; there, in the room, is the pile of wood blazing—so high!” lifting her arms. “So was it in every room. He had made piles and poured on the kerosene. I have a nose, I; I could smell it! Now, will he deny it, le scélérat?”

I suppose we all looked at Isadore. Mélanie clasped her hands and took a step towards him. Old Xavier gave his nephew a front view of a tolerably black scowl. “Eh bien, my nephew,” said he, “what sayst *thou?*”

Isadore’s sooty face could not show a change of color, but in his stiffening muscles, the straightened arms, and clinched fists one could see that he was pulling himself together. From childhood he had been taught to fear the old man before him, and those whom we fear in our childhood, we seldom can defy with unbiased calmness in later years; there is apt to be a speck of assertion about our very revolt. A sort of desperate hardihood was visible in Isadore’s bearing, now, as he frowned back at his uncle. “Oway, mon oncle,” said he, in a strident tone, “oway, I burned your accursed house. Send me to prison. *Même chose.*”

Mélanie uttered a low moan and covered her face.

“Come, mon enfant,” said the widow gently, “thou seest now.” She would have put her arm about the girl, but Mélanie pushed it aside, ran straight to Isadore, and caught him around his neck with both her arms. She was taller than he, so she drew his head to her breast instead of resting hers upon him.

Old Xavier looked on, motionless. “Bon,” he said, “why did you do it?”

Isadore lifted his head. “Why?” repeated he; “have I the heart of a mouse to see you take Mélanie away from me and do nothing? It was to live in the house that you would marry her. If the house were burned, it might be that you would build another and live in it without a wife. Et puis — I burned the house.”

“And thy arm? Was it hurt?”

“No,” answered the young fellow sullenly, yet boldly, “I said it to get you away from home.”

“And the gentlemen from the boat?”

“Some one must bear the blame. They were smoking. I spoke before Antoine that he might remember. They would not know themselves if they set it afire. There were the shavings and the wood. When they were gone I came back and made the piles and set them afire, so that the house should be all afire inside before it would show outside.”

Old Xavier smote his thigh with his hand and burst into a peal of harsh laughter; I thought that he had lost his wits; but no, the strange old creature simply was tickled by his nephew's deviltry. "And I called him un vrai blêche," he muttered. "Madame, you were right, it is a lad of spirit after all. He has been sharp enough to make a fool of Xavier Tremblay, and of you, too, M'sieu'."

There was no denying it, he had, and as I looked at him, I marveled how I could be so blind; these nervous, irrational, feminine temperaments, driven to bay, always fight like rats — desperately. With nothing to lose, Isadore looked his uncle in the eye and smiled. A grim and slow smile lighted up the other's rough features like a reflection; for the first time one could trace a resemblance between the two men.

"Come, Madame," said Xavier, turning to my wife, "what say *you*?"

"This, Monsieur," replied Susan, who alone of us took the old man's mood for what it was worth: "he proves himself your own nephew, since he can cheat you. You don't want the girl, you don't want the house; you have shown that you could do what you please. Give Mélanie to Isadore, and we will see that he pays you for the house."

I saw that Susan meant to get the price of that picture.

“Non,” cried Madame Guion, “I will not have it so!” On his part old Xavier actually made a sort of bow to my wife, saying: “Madame, I thank you, but I am rich enough to *give* my nephew the house. As for the other — Madame shall see.”

“I say, though, the insurance companies” — This humble and uncompleted sentence was started by the writer, but got no further because of a slim hand over his mouth and a sweet but peremptory voice in his ear: “Hush, Maurice, don’t you spoil things!”

So I was mute and looked at Madame Guion. Her face was a study for a tragedy. I got it only in profile, for Tremblay had taken her aside and was whispering to her. She grew more and more agitated, while he seemed in a rude way to be trying to soothe her. The two lovers clung to each other, perhaps feeling their mutual love the only solid thing in the storm. By this time the loiterers about the ruins had observed us and gradually drawn nearer, until a circle of amiable and interested eyes watched our motions. “My neighbors,” said old Xavier, “approach, I have something to say to you.” Upon this there was a narrowing of the circle, accompanied by the emerging of a number of

small children, whose feet twinkled in the air as they fled, to return, I felt certain, with absent relatives. "Neighbors," said the village ogre, in his strong, harsh voice, "attendez; you know that I vowed never to go into my new house until I should marry a maiden of twenty. I chose Mélanie Guion. She promised to marry me. Is it not so, Mélanie?"

"Oway, M'sieu'," said Mélanie, in a trembling voice.

"And are you ready, now, to keep your promise?"

"Oway, M'sieu'," the girl said again, though her voice was fainter and she turned exceedingly pale.

Old Xavier rolled his eyes over the crowd in sardonic triumph. "Eh bien, my neighbors," said he, "you hear. I have shown you that I can marry the best, like a young man. Now I will show you something else. An old man who marries a young wife is a fool, n'est ce pas, Emile Badeau?"

The unhappy Emile shook his fists in helpless rage, while his neighbors shrugged their shoulders, Badeau's connubial trials being a matter of public interest, like everybody else's so called private affairs, in St. Alphonse.

"Eh bien," continued the ogre, "I am not that fool. Why should I marry now? To go

into my new house? View it! If I build me another, I need no wife to let me enter it. And I want peace in my old age. Alors, Ma'm'selle, merci. But since I take away your husband, I give you one in my place. Isadore, my nephew, make Mélanie my niece instead of my wife. But take care, you will find her harder to drive than Bac!"

Isadore was like a man struck by lightning. His eyes glared, his knees shook, he gasped for breath. But Mélanie did the best thing possible; she ran to the old man and kissed him.

"Non, non," she sobbed, "pas mon oncle, mon père!"

Doubtless no one had kissed him since Mélanie herself was a child. He looked at her with a curious expression, almost gentle. "Oway, mon enfant," he said; and there was even a rough dignity in his bearing as he encircled her waist with his arm and turned to the crowd. "And now, my neighbors, do you hold me free from my vow?"

The villagers returned a shrill French cheer, some of them wept, and the more enterprising embraced me and overwhelmed Susan with a din of compliments. Only the widow Guion maintained a stern and bewildered silence. A bitterly disappointed woman, she was turning to go her way, when Mélanie ran to her.

“Wilt thou not forgive me, maman?” cried she, weeping and kissing the wrinkled brown cheeks, “I shall be so happy!”

“Chut! It is not thou that I blame,” said the widow, “but he is a slight creature. Bah, what use? It was the will of God. But at least, thou wilt be rich, he has said it!”

Then she directed a long glance of fierce interrogation at me. “You may trust us, Madame,” I said.

“Cela se comprend,” answered she inclining her head towards Susan, “A’vair, Madame.”

I am ashamed to confess that I received the applause of the parish quite as though I deserved it. On our departure, a week later, they displayed the flag at the hotel and fired off an ancient cannon, and all the inhabitants who were not congregated about the cannon assembled on the pier, including Isadore (who wept profusely), Mélanie, and old Xavier himself. Every man, woman, and child cheered with enthusiasm. Barring our fears that the cannon might explode, it was a proud moment, especially when we overheard the following conversation between two of our countrymen.

“What are they making all this row about?”

“Don’t you know? See that lady and gentleman? — they’re Lord and Lady Lansdowne, just been making a visit.”

At present, Susan and I are home in New York. I took the pains to inquire about the insurance and was relieved to find that there was none on the house, old Xavier having once been cheated by an insurance agent, and being the mortal foe of insurance companies, in consequence. Susan said she didn't think that it mattered, anyhow. The best of women have queer notions of public morality. Susan sent Mélanie a great box of wedding finery. In response, we have received a long letter. Madame Guion's eyes were cured a month ago. She is still opposed to the marriage, but Isadore hopes everything from time. Old Xavier is well and building him a new house.

THE BISHOP'S VAGABOND.

THE Bishop was walking down the wide Aiken street. He was the only Bishop in Aiken, and they made much of him, accordingly, though his diocese was in the West, which of course was a drawback.

He was a tall man, with a handsome, kind face under his shovel hat; portly, as a bishop should be, and having a twinkle of humor in his eye. He dressed well and soberly, in the decorous habiliments of his office. "So English," the young ladies of the Highland Park Hotel used to whisper to each other, admiring him. Perhaps this is the time to mention that the Bishop was a widower.

To-day he walked at a gentle pace, repeatedly lifting his hat in answer to a multitude of salutations; for it was a bright April day, and the street was thronged. There was the half-humorous incongruity between the people and the place always visible in a place where two thirds of the population are a mere pleasant-weather growth, dependent on the climate. Groups of Northerners stood in the red and

blue and green door-ways of the gay little shops, or sauntered past them; easily distinguished by their clothing and their air of unaccustomed and dissatisfied languor. One could pick out at a glance the new-comers just up from Florida; they were so decorated with alligator-tooth jewelry, and gazed so contemptuously at the oranges and bananas in the windows. The native Southerners were equally conspicuous, in the case of the men, from their careless dress and placid demeanor. A plentiful sprinkling of black and yellow skins added to the picturesque character of the scene. Over it all hung a certain holiday air, the reason for which one presently detected to be an almost universal wearing of flowers, — bunches of roses, clusters of violets or trailing arbutus, or twigs of yellow jasmine; while barefooted boys, with dusky faces and gleaming teeth, proffered nosegays at every corner. The Aiken nosegay has this peculiarity, — the flowers are wedged together with unexampled tightness. Truly enough may the little venders boast, “Dey’s orful lots o’ roses in dem, mister; you’ll fin’ w’en you onties ’em.” No one of the pedestrians appeared to be in a hurry; and under all the holiday air of flowers there was a pathetic disproportion of pale and weary faces.

But if they did not hurry on the sidewalk,

there was plenty of motion in the street; horses in Aiken being always urged to their full speed, — which, to be sure, is not alarming. Now, carriages were whirling by and riders galloping in both directions. The riders were of every age, sex, and condition: pretty girls in jaunty riding habits, young men with polo mallets, old men and children, and grinning negroes lashing their sorry hacks with twigs. Of the carriages, it would be hard to tell which was the more noticeable, the smartness of the vehicles, or the jaded depression of the thin beasts that pulled them. Where Park and Ashland Avenues meet at right angles the crowd was most dense. There, on one side, one sees the neat little post-office and the photographer's gallery, and off in the distance the white pine towers of the hotel, rising out of its green hills; on the other, the long street slowly climbs the hill, through shops and square white houses with green blinds, set back in luxuriant gardens. At this corner two persons were standing, a young man and a young woman, both watching the Bishop. The young woman was tall, handsome, and — always an attraction in Aiken — evidently not an invalid. The erect grace of her slim figure, the soft and varying color on her cheek, the light in her beautiful brown eyes, — all were the unmistakable

signs of health. The young man was a good-looking little fellow, perfectly dressed, and having an expression of indolent amusement on his delicate features. He had light yellow hair, cut closely enough to show the fine outline of his head, a slight mustache waxed at the ends, and a very fair complexion.

The young woman was speaking. "Do you see to whom my father is talking, Mr. Talboys?" said she.

"Plainly, he has picked up his vagabond."

"Demming? Yes, it is Demming."

"Now I wonder, do you know," said the young man, "what induces the Bishop to waste his time on such hopeless moral trash as that." He spoke in a pleasant, slow voice with an English accent.

"It is n't hopeless to him, I suppose," she answered. Her voice also was slow, and it was singularly sweet.

"I think it must be his sense of humor," he continued. "The Bishop loves a joke, and Demming is a droll fellow. He is a sort of grim joke himself, you know, a high-toned gentleman who lives by begging. He brings his bag to the hotels every day. Of course you have heard him talk, Miss Louise. His strong card is his wife. 'Th' ole 'ooman 's nigh blin','" — here Talboys gave a very good imitation of

the South Carolina local drawl — “‘an’ she ’s been so tenderly raised she cyan’t live ’thout cyoffee three times a day!’”

“I have heard that identical speech,” said Louise, smiling as Talboys knew she would smile over the imitation. “He gets a good deal from the Northerners, I fancy.”

“Enough to enable him to be a pillar of the saloons,” said Talboys. “He is a lavish soul, and treats the crowd when he prospers in his profession. Once his money gave out before the crowd’s thirst. ‘Never min’, gen’lemen,’ says our friend, ‘res’ easy. I see the Bishop agwine up the street; I’ll git a dollar from him. Yes, wait; I won’t be gwine long.’”

“And he got the money?”

“Oh, yes. I believe he got it to buy quinine for ‘th’ ole ’ooman,’ who was down with the break-bone fever. He is like Yorick, ‘a fellow of infinite jest’ — in the way of lying. He talks well, too. You ought to hear him discourse on politics. As he gets most of his revenue from the North, he is kind enough to express the friendliest sentiments. ‘I wuz opposed to the wah’s bein’ ’ is his standard speech, ‘an’ now I’m opposed to its continnerin’.’ For all that, he was a mild kind of Ku-Klux.”

“He did it for money, he says,” returned Louise. “The funniest thing about him is

his absolute frankness after he is found out in any trick. He does n't seem to have any sense of shame, and will fairly chuckle in my father's face as he is owning up to some piece of roguery."

"You know he was in the Confederate army. Fought well, too, I'm told. What does he do when the Northerners are gone? Aiken must be a pretty bare begging ground."

"Oh, he has a wretched little cabin out in the woods," said Louise, "and a sweet-potato patch. He raises sweet-potatoes and persimmons" —

"And pigs," Talboys interrupted. "I saw some particularly lean swine grubbing about in the sand for snakes. They feed on snakes, in the pine barrens, you know, which serves two purposes: kills the snakes and fills the pigs. Entertainment for man and beast, don't you see? By the way, talking of being entertained, I know of a fine old Southern manor-house over the bridge."

Louise shook her head incredulously. "I have lost faith in Southern manor-houses. Ever since I came South I have sought them vainly. All the way from Atlanta I risked my life, putting my head out of the car windows, to see the plantations. At every scrubby-looking little station we passed, the conductor would

say, 'Mighty nice people live heah; great deal of wealth heah before the wah!' Then I would recklessly put my head out. I expected to see the real Southern mansions of the novelists, with enormous piazzas and Corinthian pillars and beautiful avenues; and the white-washed cabins of the negroes in the middle distance; and the planter, in a white linen suit and a wide straw hat, sitting on the piazza drinking mint juleps. Well, I don't really think I expected the planter, but I did hope for the house. Nothing of the kind. All I saw was a moderate-sized square house, with piazzas and a flat roof, all sadly in need of paint. Now, I'm like Betsey Prig; 'I don't believe there's no sich person.' It's a myth, like the good old Southern cooking."

"Oh, they do exist," said Talboys, his eyes brightening over this long speech, delivered in the softest voice in the world. "There are houses in Charleston and Beaufort and on the Lower Mississippi that suggest the novels; but, on the whole, I think the novelists have played us false. We expect to find the ruins of luxury and splendor and all that sort of thing in the South; but in point of fact there was very little luxury about Southern life. They had plenty of service, such as it was, and plenty of horses, and that was about all; their other

household arrangements were painfully primitive. All the same, sha'n't we go over the bridge?"

Louise assented, and they turned and went their way in the opposite direction.

Meanwhile, the Bishop and his vagabond were talking earnestly. The vagabond seemed to belong to the class known as "crackers." Poverty, sickness, and laziness were written in every flutter of his rags, in every uncouth curve or angle of his long, gaunt figure and sallow face. A mass of unkempt iron-gray hair fell about his sharp features, further hidden by a grizzly beard. His black frock coat had once adorned the distinguished and ample person of a Northern senator; it wrinkled dismally about Demming's bones, while its soiled gentility was a queer contrast to his nether garments of ragged butternut, his coarse boots, and an utterly disreputable hat, through a hole of which a tuft of hair had made its way, and waved plume-wise in the wind. Around the hat was wound a strip of rusty crape. The Bishop quickly noticed this woeful addition to the man's garb. He asked the reason.

"She's done gone, Bishop," answered Demming, winking his eyes hard before rubbing them with a grimy knuckle; "th' ole 'ooman's done leff' me 'lone in the worl'. It's an orful

'fiction!" He made so pitiful a figure, standing there in the sandy road, the wind fluttering his poor token of mourning, that the Bishop's kind heart was stirred.

"I am truly sorry, Demming," said he. "Is n't this very sudden?"

"Laws, yes, Bishop, powerful suddint an' onprecedented. 'Pears 's if I cud n't git myself to b'lieve it, nohow. Yes'day ev'nin' she wuz peart's evah, out pickin' pine buds; an' this mahnin' she woked me up, an' says she, 'I reckon you'd better fix the cyoffee yo'self, Demming, I feel so cu'se,' says she. An' so I did; an' when I come to gin it ter her, oh, oh Lordy, Lordy! — 'scuse me, Bishop, — she wuz cole an' dead! Doctor cud n't do nuthin', w'en I fotch 'im. Rheutmatchism o' th' heart, he says. It wuz turrible suddint, onyhow. 'Minded me o' them thar games with the thimble, ye know, Bishop, — now ye see it, an' now ye don'; yes, 's quick 's thet!"

The Bishop opened his eyes at the comparison; but Demming had turned away, with a quivering lip, to bury his face in his hands, and the Bishop was reproached for his criticism of the other's *naïf* phraseology. Now, to be frank, he had approached Demming prepared to show severity, rather than sympathy, because of the cracker's last flagrant wrong-do-

ing; but his indignation, righteous though it was, took flight before grief. Forgetting judgment in mercy, he proffered all the consolations he could summon, spiritual and material, and ended by asking Demming if he had made any preparations for the funeral.

“Thet thar ’s w’at I ’m yere for,” replied the man mournfully. “You know jes how I ’m fixed. Cyoffins cost a heap; an’ then thar ’s the shroud, an’ I ain’t got no reg’lar fun’al cloze, an’ ’pears ’s ef ’t ’ud be a conserlation t’ have a kerridge or two. She wuz a bawn lady, Bishop; we ’re kin ter some o’ the real aristocracy o’ Carolina, — we air, fur a fac’; an I’d kin’ o’ like ter hev her ride ter own fun’al, onyhow.”

“Then you will need money?”

“Not frum you, Bishop, not a red cent; but if you uns over thar,” jerking his thumb in the direction of the white pine towers, — “if you all ’d kin’ o’ gin me a small sum, an’ ef you ’d jes start a paper, as ’t were, an’ al-so ef you yo’self ’ud hev the gret kin’ness ter come out an’ conduc’ the fun’al obskesies, it ’ud gratify the co’pse powerful. Mistress Demming ’ll be entered¹ then like a bawn lady. Yes, sir, thet thar, an’ no mo’, ’s w’at I ’m emboldened ter ax frum you.”

¹ It is supposed that Mr. Demming intended to say “interred.”

The Bishop reflected. "Demming," said he gravely, "I will try to help you. You have no objection, I suppose, to our buying the coffin and other things needed. We will pay the bills."

Demming's dejected bearing grew a shade more sombre: he waved his hand, a gesture very common with him, and usually denoting affable approval; now it meant gloomy assent. "No objection 't all, Bishop," he said. "I knows my weakness, though I don' feel now like I'd evah want ter go on no carousements no mo'. I 'm 'bliged ter you uns jes the same. An' you won't forget 'bout the cloze? I've been a right good frien' to th' Norf in Aiken, an' I hope the Norf 'll stan' by me in the hour o' trubbel. Now, Bishop, I'll be gwine 'long. You'll fin' me at the cyoffin sto'. Mose Barnwell — he's a mighty decent cullud man — lives nigh me; he's gwine fur ter len' me his cyart ter tek the cyoffin home. Mahnin', Bishop, an' min', I don' want money outen *you*. No, sir, I do *not*!"

Then, waving his hand at his hat, the cracker slouched away. The Bishop had a busy morning. He went from friend to friend, until the needed sum was collected. Nor did money satisfy him: he gathered together a suit of clothes from the tallest Northerners of benevolent im-

pulses. Talboys was too short to be a donor of clothes, but he gave more money than all the others united, — a munificence that rebuked the Bishop, for he had sought the young Boston man last of all and reluctantly; somehow, he could not feel acquainted with him, notwithstanding many meetings in many places. Moreover, he held him in slight esteem, as an idle fellow who did little good with a great fortune. In his gratitude he became expansive: told Talboys about his acquaintance with the cracker, described his experiences and perplexities, and at last invited the young man to go to the funeral, the next day. Talboys was delighted to accept the invitation; yet it could not be said that he was often delighted. But he admired the Bishop, and, even more warmly, he admired the Bishop's daughter; hence he caught at any opportunity to show his friendliness. Martin Talboys was never enthusiastic, and at times his views of life might be called cynical; but it would be a mistake to infer, therefore, that, as is common enough, he, having a mean opinion of other people, struck a balance with a very high one of himself. In truth, Martin was too modest for his own peace of mind. For years he had contrived to meet Louise, by accident, almost everywhere she went. She traveled a good deal, and her image was relieved against

a variety of backgrounds. It seemed to him fairer in each new picture. His love for the Bishop's daughter grew more and more absorbing; but at the same time he became less and less sanguine that she would ever care for him. Although he was not enthusiastic, he was quite capable of feeling deeply; and he had begun to suspect that he was capable of suffering. Yet he could not force himself to decide his fate by speaking. It was not that Louise disliked him: on the contrary, she avowed a sincere liking; she always hailed his coming with pleasure, telling him frankly that no one amused her as did he. There, alas, was the hopeless part of it; he used to say bitterly to himself that he was n't a man, a lover, to her; he was a mimic, a genteel clown, an errand boy, never out of temper with his work; in short, she did not take him seriously at all. He knew the manner of man she did take seriously, — a man of action, who had done something in the world. Once she told Talboys that he was a "capital observer." She made the remark as a compliment, but it stung him to the quick; he realized that she thought of him only as an observer. When a trifling but obstinate throat complaint brought the Bishop to Aiken, Talboys felt a great longing to win his approval. Surely, Louise, who judged all men by her fa-

ther's standard, must be influenced by her father's favor. Unhappily, the Bishop had never, as the phrase goes, "taken" to Talboys, nor did he seem more inclined to take to him now, and Martin was too modest to persist in unwelcome attentions. But he greeted the present opportunity all the more warmly.

In the morning, the three—the Bishop, Louise, and Talboys—drove to the cracker's cabin. The day was perfect, one of those Aiken days, so fair that even invalids find no complaint in their wearisome list to bring against them and can but sigh over each, "Ah, if all days might only be like this!" Hardly a cloud marred the tender blue of the sky. The air was divinely soft. They drove through the woods, and the ground was carpeted with dry pine spikes, whereon their horses' hoofs made a dull and pleasant sound. A multitude of violets grew in the little spaces among the trees. Yellow jasmine flecked the roadside shade with gold, its fragrance blending with the keen odors of the pine. If they looked up, they saw the pine tops etched upon the sky, and a solemn, ceaseless murmur beat its organ-like waves through all their talk. The Bishop had put on his clerical robes; he sat on the back seat of the carriage, a superb figure, with his noble head and imposing mien. As they rolled along,

the Bishop talked. He spoke of death. He spoke not as a priest, but as a man, dwelling on the mystery of death, bringing up those speculations with which from the beginning men have striven to light the eternal darkness.

“I suppose it is the mystery,” said the Bishop, “which causes the unreality of death, its perpetual surprise. Now, behind my certainty of this poor woman’s death I have a lurking expectation of seeing her standing in the doorway, her old clay pipe in her mouth. I can’t help it.”

“Though she was a ‘bawn lady,’ she smoked, did she?” said Talboys. Then he felt the remark to be hopelessly below the level of the conversation, and made haste to add, “I suppose it was a consolation to her; she had a pretty hard life, I fancy.”

“Awfully,” said Louise. “She was nearly blind, poor woman, yet I think she did whatever work was done. I have often seen her hoeing. I believe that Demming was always good to her, though. He is a most amiable creature.”

“Singular how a woman will bear any amount of laziness, actual worthlessness, indeed, in a man who is good to her,” the Bishop remarked.

“Beautiful trait in her character,” said Talboys. “Where should we be without it?”

“Have the Demmings never had any children?” asked Louise, who did not like the turn the talk was taking.

“Yes, one,” the Bishop answered, “a little girl. She died three years ago. Demming was devotedly attached to her. He can’t talk of her now without the tears coming into his eyes. He really,” said the Bishop meditatively, “seemed more affected when he told me about her death than he was yesterday. She died of some kind of low fever, and was ill a long time. He used to walk up and down the little path through the woods, holding her in his arms. She would wake up in the night and cry, and he would wrap her in an old army blanket, and pace in front of the house for hours. Often the teamsters driving into town at break of day, with their loads of wood, would come on him thus, walking and talking to the child, with the little thin face on his shoulder, and the ragged blanket trailing on the ground. Ah, Demming is not altogether abandoned, he has an affectionate heart!”

Neither of his listeners made any response: Talboys, because of his slender faith in Demming; Louise, because she was thinking that if the Aiken laundresses were intrusted with her father’s lawn many more times there would be nothing left to darn. They went on silently,

therefore, until the Bishop said, in a low voice, "Here we are!"

The negro driver, with the agility of a country coachman, had already sprung to the ground, and was holding the carriage door open.

Before them lay a small cleared tract of land, where a pleasant greenness of young potato vines hid the sand. In the centre was a tumble-down cabin, with a mud chimney on the outside. The one window had no sash, and its rude shutter hung precariously by a single leathern hinge. The door was open, revealing that the interior was papered with newspapers. Three or four yelping curs seemed to be all the furniture.

There was nothing extraordinary in the picture; one could see fifty such cabins, in a radius of half a mile. Nor was there anything of mark in the appearance of Demming himself, dressed exactly as he was the day before, and rubbing his eyes in the doorway. But behind him! The coachman's under jaw dropped beneath the weight of a loud "'Fo' de Lawd!" The Bishop's benignant countenance was suddenly crimsoned. Talboys and Louise looked at each other, and bit their lips. It was only a woman, — a tall, thin, bent woman in a shabby print gown, with a faded sunbonnet pushed back from her gray head and a common

clay pipe between her lips. Probably in her youth she had been a pretty woman, and the worn features and dim eyes still retained something engaging in their expression of timid good-will.

“Won’ you all step in?” she said, advancing.

“Yes, yes,” added Demming, inclining his body and waving both hands with magnificent courtesy; “alight, gentlemen, alight! I’m sorry I ain’t no staggah juice to offah ye, but yo’ right welcome to sweet-’taters an’ pussimmon beah, w’ich ’s all” —

“Demming,” said the Bishop sternly, “what does this mean? I came to bury Mrs. Demming, and — and here she is!”

“Burry me!” exclaimed the woman. “Why, I ain’t dead!”

Demming rubbed his hands, his face wearing an indescribable expression of mingled embarrassment, contrition, and bland insinuation. “Well, yes, Bishop, yere she is, an’ no mistake! Nuthin’ more ’n a swond, you unnerstan’. I ’lowed ter notify you uns this mahnin’, but fac’ is I wuz so decomposed, fin’in’ her traipsin’ ’bout in the gyardin an’ you all ’xpectin’ a fun’al, thet I jes *hed* ter brace up; an’ fac’ is I braced up too much, an’ ovahslep. I’m powerful sorry, an’ I don’ blame you uns ef you *do* feel mad!”

The Bishop flung off his robes in haste and walked to the carriage, where he bundled them in with scant regard for their crispness.

“Never heard of such a thing!” said Louise, that being her invariable formula for occasions demanding expression before she was prepared to commit herself. By this time a glimmering notion of the state of things had reached the coachman’s brain, and he was in an ecstasy. Talboys thought it fitting to speak. He turned to Mrs. Demming, who was looking from one to another of the group, in a scared way.

“Were you in a swoon?” he asked.

“Oh, laws!” cried the poor woman. “Oh, Demming, what *hev* you done gone an’ done now? Gentlemen, he did n’t mean no harm, I’m suah!”

“You were *not*, then?” said Talboys.

“Leave her ’lone, Cunnel,” Demming said quietly. “Don’ yo’ see she cyan’t stan’ no sech racket? ’Sence yo’ so mighty peart ’bout it, no, she wahn’t, an’ thet thar ’s the truf. I jes done it fur ter raise money. It was this a way. Thet thar mahnin’, w’ile I wuz a-considerin’ an’ a-contemplatin’ right smart how I wuz evah to git a few dollars, I seen Mose Barnwell gwine ’long, — yo’ know Mose Barnwell,” turning in an affable, conversational way to the grinning negro, — “an’ he ’d a string o’

crape 'roun' his hat 'cause he 'd jes done loss' his wife, an' he wuz purportin' ter git a cyoffin. So I 'lowed I 'd git a cyoffin fur him cheap. An' I reckon," said Demming, smiling graciously on his delighted black auditor, — "I reckon I done it."

"Demming," cried the Bishop, with some heat, "this exceeds patience" —

"I know, Bishop," answered the vagabond meekly, — "I know it. I wuz tempted an' I fell, as you talked 'bout in yo' sermon. It's orful how I kin do sech things!"

"And those chickens, too!" ejaculated the Bishop, with rising wrath, as new causes rushed to his remembrance. "You stole chickens, — Judge Eldridge's chickens; you who pretend to be such a stanch friend of the North" —

"Chickens!" screamed the woman. "Oh, Lordy! Oh, he nevah done thet afo'e! He'll be took to jail! Oh, Demming, how cud ye? Stealin' chickens, jes like a low-down, no-'cyount niggah!" Sobs choked her voice, and tears of fright and shame were streaming down her hollow cheeks.

Demming looked disconcerted. "Now, look a-yere!" said he, sinking his voice reproachfully; "w'at wuz the use o' bringin' thet thar up befo' th' ole 'ooman? She don' know nuthin' on it, you unnerstan', an' why mus' you rile

'er up fur? I'd not a thought it o' you, Bishop, thet I wud n't. Now, Alwynda," turning to the weeping woman, who was wiping her eyes with the cape of her sunbonnet, "jes you dry up an' stop yo' bellerin', an' I 'splain it all in a holy minnit. Thar, thar," patting her on the shoulder, "'t ain't nuthin' ter cry 'bout; 'tain't no fault o' yourn, onyhow. 'Fac' is, gen'lemen, 't wuz all 'long o' my 'preciation o' the Bishop. I'm a 'Piscopal, like yo'self, Bishop, an' I tole Samson Mobley thet you overlaid all the preachers yere fur goodness an' shortness bofe. An' he 'lowed, 'Mebbe he may fur goodness; I ain't no judge,' says he; 'but fo' shortness, we 've a feller down at the Baptis' kin beat 'im outen sight. They 've jes 'gin up sleepin' down thar,' says he, ' 'cause 't ain't worth w'ile.' So we tried it on, you unnerstand, 'cause thet riled me, an' I jes bet on it, I did; an' we tried it on, — you in the mahnin' and him in the ev'nin'. An' laws, ef did n't so happen as how you 'd a powerful flow o' speech! 'T wuz 'mazin' edifyin', but 't los' me the bet, you unnerstan'; an' onct los' I hed ter pay; an' not havin' ary chick o' my own I had ter confiscate some frum th' gineral public, an' I tuk 'em 'thout distinction o' party frum the handiest coop in the Baptis' dernomination. I kin' o' hankered arter Baptis' chick-

uns, somehow, so 's ter git even, like. Now, Bishop, I jes leaves ter you uns, cud I go back on a debt o' honah, like thet?"

"Honor!" repeated the Bishop scornfully.

Talboys interposed again: "We appear to be sold, Bishop; don't you think we had better get out of this before the hearse comes?"

Demming waved his hand at Talboys, saying in his smoothest tones, "Ef you meet it, Cunnel, p'raps you 'd kin'ly tell 'em ter go on ter Mose Barnwell's. He 's ready an' waitin'."

"Demming" — began the Bishop, but he did not finish the sentence: instead, he lifted his hat to Mrs. Demming, with his habitual stately courtesy, and moved in a slow and dignified manner to the carriage. Louise followed, only stopping to say to the still weeping woman, "He is in no danger from us; but this trick was a poor return for my father's kindness."

Demming had been rubbing his right eyebrow obliquely with his hand, thus making a shield behind which he winked at the coachman in a friendly and humorous manner; at Louise's words, his hand fell and his face changed quickly. "Don' say thet, miss," he said, a ring of real emotion in his voice. "I know I'm purty po' pickin's, but I ain't on-grateful. Yo' pa will remember I wyould n't tek no money frum *him!*"

“I would have given fifty dollars,” cried the Bishop, “rather than have had this — this scandalous fraud! Drive on!”

They drove away. The last they saw of Demming he was blandly waving his hand.

The drive back from the house so unexpectedly disclosed as not a house of mourning was somewhat silent. The Bishop was the first to speak. “I shall insist upon returning every cent of that money,” he said.

“I assure you none of us will take it,” Talboys answered; “and really, you know, the sell was quite worth the money.”

“And you did see her, after all,” said Louise dryly, “standing in the doorway, with her old clay pipe in her mouth.”

The Bishop smiled, but he sighed, too. “Well, well, I ought not to have lost my temper. But I am disappointed in Demming. I thought I had won his affection, and I hoped through his affection to reach his conscience. I suppose I deceived myself.”

“I fear he has n’t any conscience to reach,” Louise observed.

“I agree with Miss Louise,” said Talboys. “You see, Demming is a cracker.”

“Ah! the cracker has his virtues,” observed the Bishop; “not the cardinal New England virtues of thrift and cleanliness and energy;

but he has his own. He is as hospitable as an Arab, brave, faithful, and honest, and full of generosity and kindness."

"All the same, he is n't half civilized," said Talboys, "and as ignorant morally as any being you can pick up. He does n't steal or lie much, I grant you, but he smashes all the other commandments to flinders. He kills when he thinks he has been insulted, and he has n't the feeblest scruples about changing his old wife for a new one whenever he feels like it, without any nonsense of divorce. The women are just as bad as the men. But Demming is not only a cracker; he is a cracker spoiled by the tourists. We have despoiled him of his simplicity. He has n't learned any good of us, — that goes without saying, — but he has learned no end of Yankee tricks. Do you suppose that if left to himself he would ever have been up to this morning's performance? Oh, we've polished his wicked wits for him! Even his dialect is no longer pure South Carolinian; it is corrupted by Northern slang. We have ruined his religious principles, too. The crackers have n't much of any morality, but they are very religious, — all Southerners are. But Demming is an unconscious Agnostic. 'I tell ye,' he says to the saloon theologians, 'thar ain't no tellin'. 'Ligion 's a heap like jumpin'

a'ter a waggin in th' dark: yo' mo' 'n likely ter lan' on nuthin'!' And you have seen for yourselves that he has lost the cracker honesty."

"At least," said Louise, "he has the cracker hospitality left; he made us welcome to all he had."

"And did you notice," said the Bishop, who had quite smoothed his ruffled brow by this time, — "did you notice the consideration, tenderness almost, that he showed to his wife? Demming has his redeeming qualities, believe me, Mr. Talboys."

"I see that you don't mean to give him up," said Talboys, smiling; but he did not pursue the subject.

For several days Demming kept away from Aiken. When he did appear he rather avoided the Bishop. He bore the jokes and satirical congratulations of his companions with his usual equanimity; but he utterly declined to gratify public curiosity either at the saloon or the grocery. One morning he met the Bishop. They walked a long way together, and it was observed that they seemed to be on most cordial terms. This happened on Tuesday. Friday morning Demming came to the Bishop in high spirits. He showed a letter from a cousin in Charleston, a very old man, with no near kindred and a comfortable property. This

cousin, repenting of an old injustice to Demming's mother, had bethought him of Demming, his nearest relative; and sent for him, inclosing money to pay all expenses. "He is right feeble," said Demming, with a cheerful accent not according with his mournful words, "an' wants ter see me onct fo' he departs. Reckon he means ter do well by me."

The Bishop's hopeful soul saw a chance for the cracker's reclamation. So he spoke solemnly to him, warning him against periling his future by relapsing into his old courses in Charleston. Nothing could exceed Demming's bland humility. He filled every available pause in the exhortation with "Thet's so," and "Shoo's yo' bawn!" and answered, "I'm gwine ter be 's keerful 's a ole coon thet's jes got shet o' the dogs. You nevah said truer words than them thar, an' don' you forget it! I'm gwine ter buy mo' lan', an' raise hogs, an' keep th' ole 'ooman like a lady. Don' ye be 'feard o' me gwine on no' mo' tears. No, sir, none o' thet in mine. 'T wuz ony 'cause I wuz so low in my min' I evah done it, onyhow. Now, I'm gwine ter be 's sober 's a owl!"

Notwithstanding these and similar protestations, hardly an hour was gone before Demming was the glory of the saloon, haranguing the crowd on his favorite topic, the Bishop's

virtues. "High-toned gen'leman, bes' man in the worl', an' nobody's fool, neither. I'm proud to call him my frien', an' Aiken's put in its bes' licks w'en it cured *him*. Gen'lemen, he 'vised me ter fight shy o' you all. I reckon as how I mought be better off ef I'd allus a fol-lered his ammonitions. Walk up, gen'lemen, an' drink his health! My 'xpens'."

The sequel to such toasts may readily be imagined. By six o'clock, penniless and tipsy, Demming was apologizing to the Bishop on the hotel piazza. He had the grace to seem ashamed of himself. "Wust o' 't is flingin' away all thet money; but I felt kinder like makin' everybody feel good, an' I set 'em up. An' 't 'appened, somehow, they wuz a right smart o' people in, jes thet thar minit, — they gen'rally *is* a right smart o' people in when a feller sets 'em up! an' they wuz powerful dry, — they gen'rally *is* dry, *then*; an' the long an' short o' 't is, they cleaned me out. An' now, Bishop, I jes feel nashuated with myself. Suah 's yo' bawn, Bishop, I'm gwine ter reform. 'Stop short, an' nevah go on again,' like thet thar clock in the song. I am, fur a fac', sir. I'm repentin' to a s'prisin' extent."

"I certainly should be surprised if you *were* repentant," the Bishop said, dryly; then, after a pause, "Well, Demming, I will help you this

once again. I will buy you a ticket to Charleston."

Some one had come up to the couple unperceived; this person spoke quickly: "Please let me do that, Bishop. Demming has afforded me enough entertainment for that."

"You don't think no gret shakes o' me, do you, Cunnel?" said Demming, looking at Talboys half humorously, yet with a shade of something else in his expression. "You poke fun at me all the time. Well, pleases you, an' don't hurt me, I reckon. Mahnin', Bishop; mahnin', Cunnel. I'll be at th' deppo." He waved his hand and shambled away. Both men looked after him.

"I will see that he gets off," said Talboys. "I leave Aiken, myself, in the morning."

"Leave Aiken?" the Bishop repeated. "But you will return?"

"I don't expect to."

"Why, I am sorry to hear that, Mr. Talboys, — truly sorry." The Bishop took the young man's hand and pressed it. "I am just beginning to know you; I may say, to like you, if you will permit the expression. Won't you walk in with me now, and say good-by to my daughter?"

"Thanks, very much, but I have already made my adieux to Miss Louise."

“ Ah, yes, certainly,” said the Bishop, absently.

He was an absorbed clergyman ; but he had sharp enough eyes, did he choose to use them ; and Talboys’ reddening cheeks told him a great deal. It cannot be said that he was sorry because his daughter had not looked kindly on this worldly and cynical young man’s affection ; but he was certainly sorry for the young man himself, and his parting grasp of the hand was warmer than it would have been but for that fleeting blush.

“ Poor fellow, poor fellow ! ” soliloquized the Bishop, when, after a few cordial words, they had parted. “ He looks as though it had hurt him. I suppose that is the way we all take it. Well, time cures us : but it would scarcely do to tell him that, or how much harder it is to win a woman, find how precious she is, and then to lose her. Ah, well, time helps even that. ‘ For the strong years conquer us. ’ ”

But he sighed as he went back to his daughter, and he did not see the beautiful Miss Reynolds when she bowed to him, although she was smiling her sweetest and brightest smile.

Louise sat in her room. Its windows opened upon the piazza, and she had witnessed the interview. She did not waver in her conviction that she had done right. She could not wisely

marry a man whom she did not respect, let his charm of manner and temper be what it might. She needed a man who was manly, who could rule other men ; besides, how could she make up her mind to walk through life with a husband hardly above her shoulder ? Still, she conceded to herself that, had Talboys compelled one thrill of admiration from her by any mental or moral height, she would not have caviled at his short stature. But there was something ridiculous in the idea of Talboys thrilling anybody. For one thing, he took everything too lightly. Suddenly, with the sharpness of a new sensation, she remembered that he had not seemed to take the morning's episode lightly. Poor Martin ! — for the first time, even in her reveries, she called him by his Christian name, — there was an uncomfortable deal of feeling in his few words. Yet he was considerate ; he made it as easy as possible for her.

Martin was always considerate ; he never jarred on her ; possibly, the master mind might jar, being so masterful. He was always kind, too ; continually scattering pleasures about in his quiet fashion. Such a quiet fashion it was that few people noticed how persistent was the kindness. Now a hundred instances rushed to her mind. All at once, recalling something, she blushed hotly. That morning, just as Tal-

boys and she were turning from the place where he had asked and she had answered, she caught a glimpse of Demming's head, through the leaves. He had turned, also, and he made a feint of passing them, as though he were but that instant walking by. The action had a touch of delicacy in it; a Northerner of Demming's class would not have shown it. Louise felt grateful to the vagabond; at the same time, it was hardly pleasant to know that he was as wise as she in Talboys' heart affairs. As for Talboys himself, he had not so much as seen Demming; he had been too much occupied with his own bitter thoughts. Again Louise murmured, "Poor Martin!" What was the need, though, that her own heart should be like lead? Almost impatiently, she rose and sought her father.

The Bishop, after deliberation, had decided to accompany Demming to Charleston. He excused his interest in the man so elaborately and plausibly that his daughter was reminded of Talboys.

Saturday morning all three — the Bishop, the vagabond, and Talboys — started for Charleston. Talboys, however, did not know that the Bishop was going. He bought Demming's ticket, saw him safely to a seat, and went into the smoking-car. The Bishop was late, but the

conductor, with true Southern good-nature, backed the train and took him aboard. He seated himself in front of Demming, and began to wipe his heated brow.

“Why do they want to have a fire in the stove this weather?” said he.

“Well,” said the cracker slyly, “you see we hain’t all been runnin’, an’ we’re kinder chilly!”

“Humph!” said the Bishop. After this there was silence. The train rolled along; through the pine woods, past small stations where rose-trees brightened trim white cottages, then into the swamp lands, where the moisture painted the bark of tall trees, and lay in shiny green patches among them. The Southern moss dripping from the giant branches shrouded them in a weird drapery, soft as mist. There was something dreary and painful to a Northern eye, in the scene; the tall and shrouded trees, the stagnant pools of water gleaming among them, the vivid green patches of moss, the barren stretches of sand. The very beauty in it all seemed the unnatural glory of decay, repelling the beholder. Here and there were cabins. One could not look at them without wondering whether the inhabitants had the ague, or its South Carolina synonym, the “break-bone fever.” At one, a bent old woman was washing. She lifted her head, and Demming waved

his hat at her. Then he glanced at the Bishop, now busy with a paper, and chuckled over some recollection. He looked out again. There was a man running along the side of the road waving a red flag. He called out a few words, which the wind of the train tore to pieces. At the same instant, the whistle of the engine began a shrill outcry. "Sunthin' 's bust, I reckon," said Demming. And then, before he could see, or know, or understand, a tremendous crash drowned his senses, and in one awful moment blended shivering glass and surging roof and white faces like a horrible kaleidoscope.

The first thing he noticed, when he came to himself, was a thin ribbon of smoke. He watched it lazily, while it melted into the blue sky, and another ribbon took its place. But presently the pain in his leg aroused him. He perceived that the car was lying on one side, making the other side into a roof, and one open window was opposite his eyes. At the other end the car was hardly more than a mass of broken seats and crushed sides, but it was almost intact where he lay. He saw that the stove had charred the wood-work near it; hence the smoke, which escaped through a crack and floated above him. The few people in the car were climbing out of the windows as best they might. A pair of grimy arms reached down to

Demming, and he heard the brakeman's voice (he knew Jim Herndon, the brakeman, well) shouting profanely for the "next."

"Whar 's the Bishop?" said Demming.

"Reckon he's out," answered Jim. "Mought as well come yo'self! H——! you've broke yo' leg!"

"Pull away, jes the same. I don' wanter stay yere an' roast!"

The brakeman pulled him through the window. Demming shut his teeth hard; only the fear of death could have made him bear the agony every motion gave him.

The brakeman drew him to one side before he left him. Demming could see the wreck plainly. A freight train had been thrown from the track, and the passenger train had run into it while going at full speed. "The brakes would n't work," Demming heard Jim say. Now the sight was a sorry one: a heap of rubbish which had been a freight car; the passenger engine sprawling on one side, in the swamp, like a huge black beetle; and, near it, the two foremost cars of its train overturned and shattered. The people of both trains were gathered about the wreck, helplessly talking, as is the manner of people in an accident. They were, most of them, on the other side of the track. No one had been killed; but some were

wounded, and were stretched in a ghastly row on car cushions. The few women and children in the train were collected about the wounded.

“Is the last man out?” shouted the conductor.

Jim answered, “Yes, all out — no, d—— it! I see a coat tail down here.”

“Look at the fire!” screamed a woman. “Oh, God help him! The car’s afire!”

“He’s gone up, whoever he is,” muttered Jim. “They ain’t an axe nor nothin’ on board, an’ he’s wedged in fast. But come on, boys! I’ll drop in onct mo’!”

“You go with him,” another man said. “Here, you fellows, I can run fastest; I’ll go to the cabin for an axe. Some of you follow me for some water!”

Demming saw the speaker for an instant, — an erect little figure in a foppish gray suit, with a “cat’s eye” gleaming from his blue cravat. One instant he stood on the piece of timber upon which he had jumped; the next he had flung off his coat, and was speeding down the road like a hare.

“D—— ef ’t ain’t the Cunnel,” said Demming.

“Come on!” shouted Talboys, never slackening his speed. “Hurry!”

The men went. Demming, weak with pain,

was content to look across the gap between the trains and watch those left behind. The smoke was growing denser now, and tongues of flame shot out between the joints of wood. They said the man was at the other end. Happily, the wind blew the fire from him. Jim and two other men climbed in, again. Demming could hear them swearing and shouting. He looked anxiously about, seeking a familiar figure which he could not find. He thought it the voice of his own fears, that cry from within the car. "Good God, it's the Bishop!" But immediately Jim thrust his head out of the window, and called, "The Bishop's in hyar! Under the cyar seats! He ain't hurt, but we cyant move the infernal things ter get him out!"

"Oh, Lordy!" groaned the vagabond; "an' I'm so broke up I cyant liff' a han' ter help him!"

In desperation, the men outside tried to batter down the car walls with a broken tree limb. Inside, they strained feverishly at the heavy timbers. Vain efforts all, at which the crackling flames, crawling always nearer, seemed to mock.

Demming could hear the talk, the pitying comments, the praise of the Bishop: "Such a good man!" "His poor daughter, the only child, and her mother dead!" "They were

so fond of each other, poor thing, poor thing!" And a soft voice added, "Let us pray!"

"Prayin'," muttered Demming, "jes like wimmen! Laws, they don't know no better. How 'll I git ter him?"

He began to crawl to the car, dragging his shattered leg behind him, reckless of the throbs of pain it sent through his nerves. "Ef I kin ony stan' it till I git ter him!" he moaned. "Burnin' alive 's harder nor this." He felt the hot smoke on his face; he heard the snapping and roaring of the fire; he saw the men about the car pull out Jim and his companions, and perceived that their faces were blackened.

"It 'll cotch me, suah 's death!" said Demming between his teeth. "Well, 't ain't much mattah!" Mustering all his strength he pulled himself up to the car window below that from which Jim had just emerged. The crowd, occupied with the helpless rescuers, had not observed him before. They shouted at him as one man: "Get down, it's too late!" "You're crazy, you ——!" yelled Jim, with an oath.

"Never you min'," Demming answered coolly. "I know what I'm 'bout, I reckon."

He had taken his revolver from his breast, and was searching through his pockets. He soon pulled out what he sought, merely a piece of stout twine; and the crowd saw him, sitting

astride the trucks, while he tied the string about the handle of the weapon. Then he leaned over the prison walls, and looked down upon the Bishop. Under the mass of wood and iron the Bishop lay, unhurt but securely imprisoned; yet he had never advanced to the chancel rails with a calmer face than that he lifted to his friend.

“Demming,” he cried, “you here! Go back, I implore you! You can’t save me.”

“I know thet, Bishop,” groaned the cracker. “I ain’t aimin’ ter. But I cyan’t let you roast in this yere d—— barbecue! Look a yere!” He lowered the revolver through the window. “Thar ’s a pistil, an’ w’en th’ fire cotches onter you an’ yo’ gwine suah ’s shootin’, then put it ter yo’ head an’ pull the trigger, an’ yo’ ll be outen it all!”

The Bishop’s firm pale face grew paler as he answered, “Don’t tempt me, Demming! Whatever God sends I must bear. I can’t do it!” Demming paused. He looked steadily at the Bishop for a second; then he raised the revolver, with a little quiver of his mouth. “And go away, for God’s sake, my poor friend! Bear my love to my dear, dear daughter; tell her that she has always been a blessing and a joy to me. And remember what I have said to you, yourself. It will be worth dying for if

you will do that ; it will, indeed. It is only a short pain, and then heaven ! Now go, Demming. God bless and keep you. Go !”

But Demming did not move. “ Don’ you want ter say a prayer, Bishop ? ” he said in a coaxing tone, — “ jes a little mite o’ one fur you an’ me ? Ye don’ need ter min’ ’bout sayin’ ’t loud. I’ll unnerstan’ th’ intention, an’ feel jes so edified. I will, fur a fac.”

“ Go, first, Demming. I am afraid for you ! ”

“ I’m a-gwine, Bishop,” said Demming, in the same soft, coaxing tone. “ Don’ min’ me. I’m all right.” He crouched down lower, so that the Bishop could not see him, and the group below saw him rest the muzzle of the pistol on the window-sill and take aim.

A gasp ran through the crowd, — that catching of the breath in which overtaxed feeling relieves itself. “ He’s doin’ the las’ kindness he can to him,” said the brakeman to the conductor, “ and by the Lord, he’s giv’ his own life to do it ! ”

The flames had pierced the roof, and streamed up to the sky. Through the sickening, dull roar they heard the Bishop’s voice again : —

“ Demming, are you gone ? ”

The cracker struck a loose piece of wood, and sent it clattering down. “ Yes, Bishop, that wuz me. I’m safe on th’ groun’. Good-by,

Bishop. I do feel 'bleeged ter you ; an', Bishop, them chickens wuz the fust time. They wuz, on my honah. Now, Bishop, shet yo' eyes an' pray, fur it 's a-comin ! ”

The Bishop prayed. They could not hear what he said, below. No one heard save the uncouth being who clung to the window, revolver in hand, steadily eying the creeping red death. But they knew that, out of sight, a man who had smiled on them, full of life and hope but an hour ago, was facing such torture as had tried the martyr's courage, and facing it with as high a faith.

With one accord men and women bent their heads. Jim, the brakeman, alone remained standing, his form erect, his eyes fixed on the two iron lines that made an angle away in the horizon. “ Come on ! ” he yelled, leaping wildly into the air. “ Fo' the Lord's sake, hurry ! D— him, but he 's the bulliest runner ! ”

Then they all saw a man flying down the track, axe in hand. He ran up to the car side. He began to climb. A dozen hands caught him. “ You 're a dead man if you get in there ! ” was the cry. “ Don't you see it 's all afire ? ”

“ Try it from the outside, Colonel ! ” said the conductor.

“ Don't you see I have n't time ? ” cried Talboys. “ He 'll be dead before we can get to

him. Stand back, my men, and, Jim, be ready to pull us both out!"

The steady tones and Talboys' business-like air had an instantaneous effect. The crowd were willing enough to be led; they fell back, and Talboys dropped through the window. To those outside the whole car seemed in a blaze, and over them the smoke hung like a pall; but through the crackling and roaring and the crash of falling timber came the clear ring of axe blows, and Talboys' voice shouting, "I say, my man, don't lose heart! We're bound to get you out!"

"Lordy, he don't know who 't is," said Demming. "Nobody could see through that thar smoke!"

All at once the uninjured side of the car gave way beneath the flames, falling in with an immense crash. The flame leaped into the air.

"They're gone!" cried the conductor.

"No, they're not!" yelled Demming. "He's got him, safe an' soun'!" And as he spoke, scorched and covered with dust, bleeding from a cut on his cheek but holding the Bishop in his arms, Talboys appeared at the window. Jim snatched the Bishop, the conductor helped out Talboys, and half a dozen hands laid hold of Demming. He heard the wild cheer that greeted them; he heard another cheer for the

men with the water, just in sight; but he heard no more, for as they pulled him down a dozen fiery pincers seemed tearing at his leg, and he fainted dead away.

The Bishop's daughter sat in her room, making a very pretty picture, with her white hands clasped on her knee and her soft eyes uplifted. She looked sad enough to please a pre-Raphaelite of sentiment. Yet her father, whom this morning she would have declared she loved better than any one in the world, had just been saved from a frightful death. She knew the story of his deliverance. At last she felt that most unexpected thrill of admiration for Talboys; but Talboys had vanished. He was gone, it was all ended, and she owned to herself that she was wretched. Her father was with Demming and the doctors. The poor vagabond must hobble through life on one leg, henceforward. "If he lived," the doctor had said, making even his existence as a cripple problematic. Poor Demming, who had flung away his life to save her father from suffering, — a needless, useless sacrifice, as it proved, but touching Louise the more because of its very failure!

At this stage in her thoughts, she heard Sam, the waiter, knocking softly, outside. Her first question was about Demming. "The opera-

tion's ovah, miss, an' Mr. Demming he's sinkin'," answered Sam, giving the sick man a title he had never accorded him before, "an' he axes if you 'd be so kin' 's to step in an' speak to him; he's powerful anxious to see you."

Silently Louise arose and followed the mulatto. They had carried Demming to the hotel: it was the nearest place, and the Bishop wished it. His wife had been sent for, and was with him. Her timid, tear-stained face was the first object that met Louise's eye. She sat in a rocking-chair close to the bed, and, by sheer force of habit, was unconsciously rocking to and fro, while she brushed the tears from her eyes. Demming's white face and tangle of iron-gray hair lay on the pillow near her.

He smiled feebly, seeing Louise. She did not know anything better to do than to take his hand, the tears brightening her soft eyes. "Laws," said Demming, "don' do thet. I ain't wuth it. Look a yere, I got sun'thin' ter say ter you. An' you must n't min', 'cause I mean well. You know 'bout — yes'day mahnin'. Mabbe you done what you done not knowin' yo' own min', — laws, thet 's jes girls, — an' I wants you ter know jes what kin' o' feller he is. You know he saved yo' pa, but you don' know, mabbe, thet he did n't know 't was the Bishop till he'd jump down in thet thar flamin' pit o'

hell, as 't were, an' fished him out. He done it jes 'cause he 'd thet pluck in him, an' — don' you go fer ter chippin' in, Cunnel. I'm a dyin' man, an' don' you forget it ! Thar he is, miss, hidin' like behin' the bed."

Louise during this speech had grown red to the roots of her hair. She looked up into Talboys' face. He had stepped forward. His usual composure had quite left him, so that he made a pitiful picture of embarrassment, not helped by crumpled linen and a borrowed coat a world too large for him. "It's just a whim of his," he whispered hurriedly; "he wanted me to stay. I didn't know — I didn't understand ! For God's sake, don't suppose I meant to take such an advantage of the situation ! I am going directly. I shall leave Aiken to-night."

It was only the strain on her nerves, but Louise felt the oddest desire to laugh. The elegant Martin cut such a very droll figure as a hero. Then her eye fell on Demming's eager face, and a sudden revulsion of feeling, a sudden keen realization of the tragedy that Martin had averted brought the tears back to her eyes. Her beautiful head dropped. "Why do you go — now ?" said she.

"Hev you uns made it up, yet ?" murmured Demming's faint voice.

“Yes,” Talboys answered, “I think we have, and — I thank you, Demming.” The vagabond waved his hand with a feeble assumption of his familiar gesture. “Yo’ a square man, Cunnel. I allus set a heap by you, though I did n’t let on. An’ she ’s a right peart young lady. I’m glad yo’ gwine ter be so happy. Laws, I kind o’ wish I wuz to see it, even on a wooden leg” — The woman at his side began to sob. “Thar, thar, Alwynda, don’ take on so ; cyan’t be helped. You mus’ ’scuse her, gen’lemen ; she so petted on me she jes cyan’t hole in !”

“Demming,” said the Bishop, “my poor friend, the time is short ; is there anything you want me to do ?” Demming’s dull eyes sparkled with a glimmer of the old humor.

“Well, Bishop, ef you don’ min’, I’d like you ter conduc’ the fun’al services. Reckon they ’ll be a genuwine co’pse this yere time, fo’ suah. An’, Bishop, you’ll kind o’ look ayfter Alwynda ; see she gets her coffee an’ terbacco all right. An’ I wants ter ’sure you all again thet them thar chickens wuz the fust an’ ony thing I evah laid han’s on t’ want mine. Thet ’s the solemn truf ; ain’t it, Alwynda ?”

The poor woman could only rock herself in the chair, and sob, “Yes, ’t is. An’ he ’s been a good husband to me. I’ve allus hed the bes’

uv everything! Oh, Lordy, 'pears 's like I cyan't bear it, nohow!"

Louise put her hand gently on the thin shoulder, saying, "I will see that she never wants anything we can give, Demming; and we will try to comfort her."

The cracker looked wistfully from her fresh, young face to the worn face below. "She wuz 's peart an' purty 's you, miss, w'en I fust struck up with 'er," said he slowly. "Our little gal wuz her very image. Alwynda," in a singularly soft, almost diffident tone, "don' take on so; mabbe I'm gwine fer ter see 'er again. 'T won't do no harm ter think so, onyhow," he added, with a glance at Talboys, as though sure there of comprehension.

Then the Bishop spoke, solemnly, though with sympathy, urging the dying man, whose worldly affairs were settled, to repent of his sins and prepare for eternity. "Shall I pray for you, Demming?" he said in conclusion.

"Jes as you please, Bishop," answered Demming, and he tried to wave his hand. "I ain't noways partickler. I reckon God a'mighty knows I'd be th' same ole Demming ef I could get up, an' I don' mean ter make no purtenses. But mabbe it'll cheer up th' ole 'ooman a bit. So you begin, an' I'll bring in an Amen whenever it 's wanted!"

So speaking, Demming closed his eyes wearily, and the Bishop knelt by the bedside. Talboys and Louise left them, thus. After a while, the wife stretched forth her toil-worn hand and took her husband's. She thought she was aware of a weak pressure. But when the prayer ended there came no Amen. Demming was gone where prayer may only faintly follow; nor could the Bishop ever decide how far his vagabond had joined in his petitions. Such doubts, however, did not prevent his cherishing an assured hope that the man who died for him was safe, forever. The Bishop's theology, like that of most of us, yielded, sometimes, to the demands of the occasion.

MRS. FINLAY'S ELIZABETHAN CHAIR.

“WHAT do they want?” said Mr. Finlay. A sunbeam, reflected from the burnished silver of the urn, flicked athwart his face, to emphasize his smile. Mr. Finlay smiled often, for he was not only a good-tempered man, but a man keenly susceptible to humorous impressions. He was a type of domestic happiness this morning, seated in that family temple, the dining-room, his two handsome boys on his knees and the breakfast-table before him. It was a table glittering with silver and cut-glass, and it wore that air of elegant antiquity which pertained to all Mrs. Finlay's house-furnishing, being further adorned with the shell-like blue china brought from over the seas by Mrs. Finlay's great-uncle, old Captain Crowninshield. The room was ample and lofty, fitted up in oak, which had gleams of red and gold in the sunken carvings, to match the red and gold stamped leather on the walls. There were no plaques, no pictures, unless that were a picture revealed by the wide glass doors, — a glimpse of tropical foliage and falling water and the white Diana

lifting her lovely arms above the green. Only a glimpse it was; but it supplied an effect of repose and mystery that the sunshiny room must have lacked else, and added a light touch to the half foreign picturesqueness everywhere, the rows of Venetian glass on the sideboard, the Persian rug on the floor, the fire-place, with its quaint Flemish tiles, the dim and heavy folds of old Italian tapestry draping the windows. Framed by these folds were two more pictures: on one side, an undulating sweep of hills in the fresh beauty of June, brightly painted wooden houses showing through the trees; on the other, a long street, ending in a huddle of factory chimneys and the Mississippi quivering and glittering below. Mrs. Finlay was gazing absently at the river. Her smooth, low brow was darkened by a rare cloud.

“Want?” she repeated. “Oh, everything; a museum in a country town is such an elastic affair. Mrs. Cody says they don’t want to confine it to pictures. They were all here, the entire committee, Mrs. Cody, Mrs. Hubbard, and Miss Durham.”

“Violet?” said Mr. Finlay, looking interested. “I wish I had seen her; it is an age since I have seen Violet.”

“She was looking extremely pretty,” said Mrs. Finlay, who had been told long ago that

her husband had once wanted to marry Violet Durham. "She picked out most of my Meissen plates; she knew the King's Period at a glance. And they want my old Flemish lace and most of the pictures, and the old sword and the screens, and — oh, yes, they want the chair!"

"Well, you will let them have the things, won't you?"

"Everything but the chair. There *is* a limit, Tom."

"Why not the chair? They won't hurt it; and here's a chance for you to educate the Wrenham taste."

Mrs. Finlay shrugged her pretty shoulders, and said that she had no such ambition.

"Milly," said Tom Finlay, looking at his wife over his son's curly head, "don't you think you are just the least bit hard on Wrenham?"

"On the contrary," she answered coldly, "it is they who are hard on me. They quite disapprove of me, Tom. I have wine at dinner, with my two boys growing up; I have a butler and a coachman; hence I am a snob and ape the English. Don't you remember, Tom, how the boys used to shout after poor John Rogers, whenever he drove out, 'Hi, where's the circus?' I shall be contented if the museum cultivates the Wrenham taste up to the point of tolerating my liveries."

“I don’t think it’s the liveries that makes the trouble, Milly,” said Mr. Finlay, gravely ; “it’s a notion they have here that you look down on them as uncouth and provincial. Perhaps we are, but we don’t like to be despised for it, all the same. I’m not complaining, you know. I realize that it is a bore for you to have to live in Wrenham ; but it would really be so much less of a bore if you could like the people, and there is a great deal in them to like when you get at them.”

“Probably I have never got at them,” said Mrs. Finlay.

Then she was silent. The Finlays were rich enough to have made a figure in New York or Boston, and it was the skeleton in Emily Finlay’s closet that she must live in Wrenham, a stupid, censorious, provincial town, where one couldn’t even get ice-cream in bricks.

Too well bred to exhibit the skeleton, possibly she did not lock it up securely, since the Wrenham people knew quite well that she never stayed a day longer there than she could help. On their side, they repaid this passive and unexpressed dislike with indignant criticism. They mimicked her accent, ridiculed her hospitality, mocked at her housekeeping.

It was a pity, too, for Mrs. Finlay was a charming woman. She had vivacity as well as

repose, and such exquisite taste in dress that she passed for a beauty ; although, to be frank, she was simply a graceful creature with a Greek forehead, most beautiful brown eyes, and a delicate mouth a trifle too large for her face.

But grace and charm, both, were wasted on Wrenham. Indeed, that the criticism was not more bluntly expressed she owed to her husband. Tom Finlay — so every one called him — was the most popular man in all the country round about ; he was liked by the towns-people and the farmers, by the workmen in his coal mines and the clerks in his railroad office ; by women and children ; for that matter, by the very dogs on the street and the horses in his stable. Nor was such universal affection strange. Tom Finlay was a man at once upright and genial, and he had a singularly gentle and modest manner. He was the descendant of an ancient Scotch family, whose two centuries in America had obliterated their national characteristics. The two centuries had been spent in Philadelphia ; but Tom's father had gone to Illinois for his health, and there, in Wrenham, Tom was born. Inheriting a fortune, he had been rather elaborately educated ; but Harvard and Heidelberg could not quite brush away the flavor of the prairies ; to the end he was a Westerner ; he had a dash of the West-

ern unconventionality and all the Western energy ; and there was in him a peculiarly Western blending of sympathy and shrewdness. Nothing human was foreign to him, yet he rarely threw away either his money or his emotions. His attachment to the soil certainly was not Western ; it must have come to him from his Scotch ancestors. The original family of Finlays had it also. They abode in Philadelphia, still, cherishing the family traditions and the old portraits by Peale and Copley. They mourned over Tom, " who was not like the Finlays." His choice of a wife, they felt, was a direct interposition of Providence. " A Massachusetts Endicott!" they said under their breath, and they welcomed Emily with open arms. She justified their confidence, taking the liveliest interest in Tom's ancestors and reverently admiring the family relics. As for Tom, he laughed openly at the illustrious house of Finlay. The glories of a race, tracing the roots of its ancestral tree down to the stone coffins of the early Scottish kings, were only a joke to this irreverent descendant. " It was his horrid Western humor," his wife supposed. She dreaded Tom's humor, which found its food everywhere, quiet as it was. Though he was the most generous and tolerant of husbands, she sometimes had the strangest, chilliest sensa-

tion of serving as the butt of his silent and secret wit. He never ridiculed her; he was only amused by her, which was worse. Her fears did her husband injustice, but they were so undemonstrative that he never had a chance to dispel them. All the same they did their work well. They cut off the natural simple confidences between husband and wife. They made Emily shy of any vivid expression of feeling. They repressed the very evidences of her affection for Tom, while they made it out of the question for her to confess those vague and passing doubts which trouble the serenest love when the lover is a woman. Besides, she was a New England woman, trained to exaggerate her conscience and underrate her emotions. Therefore, she tried on honest, unworldly Tom tactics which had been better suited to a worn-out man of pleasure. She gave him a beautiful and harmonious home; she won admiration everywhere — except in Wrenham; she never let him see her out of temper; in short, she made him delightfully comfortable. When they were away from Wrenham, — and they were away from Wrenham a great deal, — Tom was told on all sides how fortunate he was in his wife. He agreed heartily; yet, in truth, he was not more satisfied with his married happiness than was she. He would have liked

Emily to be more expansive; he longed for those trivial confidences which she withheld as bores; and, on many accounts, it would have gratified him to have had his wife fond of his native town. But, being so tolerant, he reasoned that he could not expect everything from one woman. "Milly is the most charming and sweetest-tempered woman in the world, and the best mother," thought Tom, stroking a rather melancholy smile with his big hand; "and I'm much too ugly and tame for a beautiful woman to fall desperately in love with me. Very likely I'm a trifle provincial in the bargain. Wrenham and I suit each other. It is n't odd we don't just suit her." Therefore, he said nothing of his feelings. To-day, for the first time in years, he had spoken. Now, he was blaming himself for his speech. What was the use? He had merely bothered Milly. Mrs. Finlay, on her part, was disgusted with herself because she had shown a tinge of irritability.

"You see, Tom," she said after a pause, "that chair is my pet weakness."

"Well, I would n't send it then," answered Tom, easily.

Mrs. Finlay considered.

Now, the chair was the delight of her eyes — the darling of her pride; a genuine Eliza-

bethan chair of age-blackened oak, given her by the chief of the Finlay clan, who still maintained a faded magnificence in the Highlands. Originally it was an English chair, coming north as part of the bridal portion of the English wife of one of the Finlays; and tradition declared that the hapless Queen of Scots, while visiting her loyal follower, the then Sir Fergus, had made the chair her throne. The Finlay arms were carved on the back, and the date, — a sight to awe caviling skeptics. Very dear to Mrs. Finlay was the chair; dearer than her pictures or her rare old engravings or her fragile treasures from Venice, or even the wonderful vase which was possibly “Henri Deux”; dearer by far than her own family heir-looms of sword and clock and china. There was another sword, a Scottish claymore, as well as a battered buckler, further gifts of Sir Fergus; but a haze hung over their history, and Mrs. Finlay, alluding to them, simply gave them the general title of honor, “In the family.” Of course, there could be no comparison of such as these with the chair. This was why Mrs. Finlay considered. The children thought it time to join in the conversation. Fergus, the elder, who was nine, wanted to know what kind of a show an art museum was; “did it have an elephant?”

“They only have pictures and things,” said his mother; “you may go, if we are here.”

“I’d rather go to Barnum’s,” said Fergus, thoughtfully. “Say, mamma, let’s stay and go to Barnum’s; you take me. Lots of boys’ mammas take them to the circus!”

“Francis will take you, brother, and you may ask that boy you like so much — Jimmy Hubbard, is n’t it?”

“I’m ’fraid he would n’t want to go with me, he’s so big,” Fergus replied, despondently. Jimmy Hubbard was his boy hero, but he was fifteen, and Fergus worshiped him from afar. “Maybe, though,” he continued, brightening, “he might if I had on long pants; I would n’t look so little then; and, mamma, *honest*, there ain’t another boy in Wrenham, big as me, wears short pants!”

“Do say trousers, Fergus. Anyhow, we shan’t be in Wrenham much more than a week. You shall see Jumbo, East” —

“Oh, mamma!” said Fergus, reproachfully; and, “Oh, mamma!” echoed little four-year-old Tom.

“My very children desert me and like the place,” thought Mrs. Finlay.

“Better stay till this fandango is over, don’t you think, Milly?” said Tom; “it looks more neighborly.”

“Very well, dear,” said Emily, with a smile which, under the circumstances, was heroic. She turned the talk lightly to something else; but when Tom and the children were gone, and she was alone in the pretty dining-room, she sighed.

Tom Finlay came home to luncheon that day, and ran in upon the “soliciting committee” of the Wrenham Art Museum. They were standing in the hall, around the chair, all three, Mrs. Hubbard, Mrs. Cody, and Violet Durham. Mrs. Hubbard was the president of the library, for the benefit of which the museum was to be. She was a tall woman, with winning manners, and a handsome, care-worn face. Her husband was a district judge. His salary was small, and they had six children; but Mrs. Hubbard was always pressed to serve on church committees and to aid charitable undertakings, because she had so much tact and was “such a worker.” Mrs. Cody, the second member, had a more brilliant worldly lot, being the wife of a rich grocer. She was large, florid, and sprightly, and her gleaming black satin gown rattled and sparkled with jet pendants. Violet Durham, the remaining member, leaned over the high chair-back, her pretty face upraised. The wind had roughened her smooth, black braids; one loosened lock curled against her white

neck; under the shadow of her hat, her great, dark eyes were shining. She wore a simple cambric gown, which had brown figures on a yellowish background, and there were bows of brown ribbon about it, with long ends to flutter when she moved; and a careless bunch of Jacqueminot roses was stuck in her belt. In the light poise of her figure, in the expression of her face, even in the arrangement of her daintily fresh dress, there was an air of cheerful animation; she made one think of prairie flowers when the breeze shakes the dew from them. Tom Finlay gave her a glance of admiration and a half wistful smile. He had known Violet all his life. Her only brother, who died at college, had been his most intimate friend; Mrs. Durham used to call Tom "her other boy"; he was always at their house. Naturally, he fell in love with Violet. It was a boyish passion, never avowed and soon cured; and he married Emily Finlay with no disturbing memories. He did more; he gave substantial aid to the young lawyer whom Violet had preferred to him. She was on the eve of marrying this man when both her father and he were killed in a railway accident. Colonel Durham left a large property in such a state of confusion that it was feared there would be nothing left for Violet and her mother. Then Tom Finlay

came forward; his advice and energy, and the loan he insisted upon making them, rescued a modest independence from the tangle. Mrs. Durham and Violet went abroad, and were gone five years. Tom wanted his wife to take these good friends of his to her heart; therefore, praising himself for Machiavelian wile, he was very reticent about them, and said not a word of his little romance. So the story came to Mrs. Finlay in bits, to be pieced together by her fancy. She did not take the Durhams to her heart. She was perfectly courteous; she asked them to the house whenever Tom suggested; but the pleasant, informal intercourse that he had planned never came. He did not complain; indeed, what cause for complaint had he? Mrs. Finlay did all he asked; but there was a sore spot in his regret. To-day, as he greeted Violet, he was thinking how seldom he saw the Durhams in his home, and how welcome he had always been made to theirs. A hundred trivial, touching recollections of his childhood helped to bring that wistful curve to his lips. Instantly it was gone, and he was greeting the ladies with most commonplace politeness; but his wife had seen it before it went.

The moment the salutations were over, Mrs. Cody, who had been speaking, continued: —

“Yes, indeed, I know your feeling, Mrs. Finlay. When they asked me for my Jackson chair, — it was given to Mr. Cody by the General himself, you know, and he said it was a hundred years old, — well, when they asked for that, it didn’t seem as though I *could* let it go. But we’re so interested in the library, and of course it’s different with you; you can’t be expected, as I told the ladies, to feel an interest. It ain’t as though you belonged to the town.”

“I hope you don’t think of us as *not* belonging to Wrenham,” said Tom; “I’m a regular Wrenham boy.”

Mrs. Cody waved her plump hand. “Oh, you, of course, Mr. Finlay; but gentlemen are different; you have your business here. But we see so little of Mrs. Finlay, we feel she is quite a stranger.”

Mrs. Cody had a marvelous faculty for saying stinging things. Charitable people held that she was simply heedless; the less charitable said her shafts were too well aimed for shots in the air. Mrs. Hubbard hurried into the conversation.

“Mrs. Finlay always shows she is not a stranger by her kindness,” she said; “she has let us have such a quantity of beautiful things.”

“That’s right,” said Tom, cordially; “can’t you think of something else?”

“Only the chair,” Mrs. Cody replied, solemnly.

Mrs. Finlay looked from the speaker to her husband.

“If you really think the chair will help the museum, you are quite welcome to it,” she said.

The visitors broke into a confusion of thanks.

“It is *very* kind of you, Mrs. Finlay,” cried Violet Durham. “I will look after the chair, myself.”

“We will *all* look after it,” said Mrs. Cody. “And now, Mrs. Finlay, you encourage us to ask one favor more: won’t you come on to our general committee?”

Again Emily glanced at her husband; there was a familiar twinkle in his eye.

“I fear I shan’t be any help to you,” she answered, gravely, “but — yes, certainly, if you wish it.”

It must be confessed that, though the committee professed unbounded gratitude and satisfaction over this last boon, they looked rather blank; Mrs. Finlay guessed that they had expected a refusal. She urged them to stay to luncheon, a courtesy which had its natural effect, the hastening of their departure.

After they were gone, Tom Finlay said: “You were very good-natured, Milly.”

“It was not good-nature, Tom,” she answered; “it was — well, I am not sure I know what it was myself.”

She walked up-stairs, leaving him whistling softly.

.
The Wrenham Art Museum opened its doors two weeks later. For days the workers had toiled over a chaos of old books, pictures, and bric-a-brac. The result exceeded their hopes. But even in riches there is embarrassment. The usual procession of petty trials had filed through the days. A sad amount of ill-feeling was caused by a few slips of memory, some ladies not being asked to help at all, and others being asked too late. Careless remarks about the objects of art had wounded sensitive souls. Disputes had arisen in the committees. There was the quarrel about the building, happily settled at last by Mr. Cody's generous offer of his late grocery shop, free of rent. To be sure, the vigilant nose could still sniff odors of salt fish, kerosene oil, and molasses, despite the labors of the scrub-women; and it never had been considered a well-lighted shop. But a gift horse should not be looked in the mouth; it was a large, convenient, inexpensive museum hall, and the committee accepted it gratefully, as was their duty.

The selection of a janitor was not so easily made. Mrs. Cody proposed a retainer of her own, an old fellow named Judson, who picked up a precarious livelihood, mowing lawns, running of errands, and working out poll-taxes, while his wife made up the deficiencies in the family income by taking in washing. Judson had lately joined a temperance society, but a particularly unsavory past marred his reputation.

This was Miss Durham's objection to him.

"He may get drunk and burn us all up," said she; "besides, he is a weak old man, and could n't fight a burglar!"

"He belongs to the Sons of Temperance," Mrs. Cody returned stiffly; "he don't drink a drop, and he will have a pistol."

A mild little woman here said that she guessed he did need the place; his wife had been sick most of the winter.

"For my part," said Mrs. Cody warmly, "I think that when anybody repents and is struggling to do better, they ought to be encouraged and not trampled on!"

"That's so," another member of the committee agreed. "Besides, we want to have Mrs. Judson to clean, and it will be much more convenient. She can come in the mornings, too, and sweep and dust. She ought n't to

charge much, if we have him. We can make all the cleaning part of his business; then she'll come and do it."

In vain Violet pleaded the danger of Judson's relapsing into his old habits; mercy and thrift combined carried the day; Mrs. Finlay was the single member voting with her.

Mrs. Finlay came to most of the meetings. She said little and noticed much. Mrs. Hubbard, "for her sins," Violet said, was the chief ruler of the artistic council. Mrs. Finlay used to marvel at her unflinching patience. She thought her own politeness, well trained as it was, would have trembled beneath the awful responsibilities of china, the charges of express companies, the delays of printers, the assaults of irate owners of pictures which were not hung to their taste, and of distracted hanging committees and amateur artists with pictures of their own to show, who had the "artistic temperament" to such a degree that they could scarcely be trusted in the same room together. But Mrs. Hubbard never winced, she only looked rather more tired at times. Her son and Violet were her great helpers. Jimmy Hubbard was young Fergus Finlay's hero, a tall lad of fifteen, whose wrists were always growing out of his jacket sleeves. He was devoted to Violet, and Violet was devoted to

Jimmy's handsome, overworked mother. They did a little of nearly everything that was to be done, from scrubbing show-cases to writing advertisements.

"Only," said Violet, "I trust a confiding public does n't believe the wild tales owners of antiquities tell about their things. If this exhibition lasts much longer, I shall lose my soul — I've got into such a way of lying!" Jimmy's specialty was painting placards. He made beautiful letters, but his spelling was not beyond reproach. He enjoyed the museum immensely. "Such fun!" said Jimmy; "those people in the picture-room are just going it! Mrs. Cody had somebody's picture took down and hers hung in the same place; said her picture needed that light and t'other one didn't. And now the other woman, she's come back, and — oh, ain't they having a circus, though! And up in the room where they have the Japanese things, they've lost all the labels; they tumbled off and got mixed up, and they're putting 'em back by guess. Folks'll open their eyes when they see the catalogue. And downstairs in the china-room, somebody's hooked their show-case, so the china's standing round on the floor; and they say they can't do nothing till they get another show-case, so they've gone off to dinner, and there ain't nobody in the room 'cept a dog!"

“A dog!” cried Mrs. Hubbard, while Mrs. Finlay turned pale. “I must go this instant” —

“Oh, I coaxed him out,” said Jimmy; “I thought it didn’t look just healthy for the china. Guess he had n’t broke much; some of it was broke to start with, was n’t it?”

Poor Mrs. Hubbard hurried away. Violet laughed.

“I think I must hunt them up a show-case,” said she. “Take our old books out, Jimmy, and let us give them that.”

“But you spent all the morning arranging them,” said Mrs. Finlay; “and you brought the show-case yourself. It is quite too bad!”

“Oh, it does n’t matter,” answered Violet, gayly; “it’s all for the public good.” She was always cheerful. “I suppose I have no proper pride,” she said once; “nobody wants me to be chairman of anything; my valuable suggestions have been uniformly rejected; and still, Jimmy, we are happy!”

“I wish that Mrs. Cody was n’t chairman of our committee, though,” said Jimmy; “she never does a thing — just sails round and bosses!”

“But she has been very liberal. Think of the things she has sent us; think of the Jackson chair!”

“It ain't half as pretty as Mrs. Finlay's,” said Jimmy, unwitting that Mrs. Finlay stood behind him; “and she makes ten times as much fuss. No Cody in mine, thank you.”

Mrs. Finlay smiled as she walked away, feeling more friendly than she would have believed possible toward Violet and Jimmy. She had been as good as her word and sent the chair. Francis, the butler, attended to its safe delivery. He remained while Violet removed the wrappings.

“Mrs. Finlay said as how you would look after it yourself, Miss,” he remarked, in a tone of deep solemnity, adding, as if from the imperious promptings of his own conscience, “She sets the world by that chair, and I would n't have it hurt for nothing whatsoever!”

“It shan't be my fault if it gets hurt, Francis,” Violet answered.

On the appointed day the museum was opened. The Cody chair stood beside Mrs. Finlay's on a kind of dais of honor, and to many minds was the nobler chair of the two. Like the Finlay chair, it was of imposing proportions. Its substance was mahogany, and — again like the Finlay chair — it had arms. Indeed, at first view there was a general resemblance of form, if not of color, between the two chairs, although that of Mrs. Finlay was orna-

mented with florid carving as behooved an Elizabethan chair, while the lines of the other were chastely plain.

From the first the exhibition was a triumph. It went victoriously on to its close. One day, somewhere near the middle of its career, Violet Durham walked through it with her mother. The rooms were almost empty, for the time was early in the morning. The two women paused before a screen of Mrs. Finlay's, a marvel of embroidery on dull gold plush.

"Has n't she ravishing taste?" said Violet; "all her things are so lovely. Why did fate direct Mrs. Cody to hang that horror of a crazy-quilt directly over it? Mrs. Finlay will faint when she sees it; it will be the last straw. I wish you could see her in the committees, so disgusted with our vulgarities, but so invincibly polite. She never says a word, but anything more deadly superior than her silence I never did encounter. I never am with her, anyhow, that I don't feel myself so hopelessly provincial that I almost don't want to live."

"You are unjust, Violet," said Mrs. Durham, a placid gentlewoman, with soft gray hair and a grave sweet smile; "Mrs. Finlay is n't a bit of a snob" —

"Oh, I don't mean she is. What I do think is that she is rather narrow-minded. She can't

conceive of people being nice who are n't nice in just her way, who have n't just such manners, for instance, and just such ways of thinking, and have n't been to Europe just so many times. Tom deserves a woman cut on a larger pattern. It makes it hard for him."

"He seems perfectly satisfied," said Mrs. Durham, smiling. And then they passed on.

Now, Mrs. Finlay was behind the screen. It was purely an accident. She happened to be standing there looking at some articles on the wall. She did not think of their discussing any personal matter, and after they had begun to speak and she understood, she was too surprised and embarrassed to go forward.

The conversation was a revelation. Her first emotion was a shock. She felt as though she had been shown to be brutally rude. True, she did believe her ways of living and thinking vastly better than those of a country town; but her sense of superiority was so deeply rooted that it was hardly visible to her own consciousness; to manifest it to its objects seemed to her unutterably indelicate. Her cheeks were burning as she stepped forth from her involuntary hiding-place.

Was she narrow-minded, she who prided herself upon her cosmopolitan toleration? Had her distaste for life in Wrenham made it hard

for Tom? Did *he* think her narrow-minded? Such thoughts made her miserable for days. "The worst of it, too," she said to herself, "is that it is no use my trying to pacify them. Whatever I do, they are bound to misunderstand me!" Nevertheless, she went again and still another time to the museum. The children went, and Tom and Francis, and John Rogers (who was very much bored), and Élise, Mrs. Finlay's maid, and the cook, and the other maids, and the gardener with all his family. "I will say she spends her money on us," said Mrs. Cody.

To the very end the weather was propitious; but the day after, the clouds distilled a gentle, unremitting drizzle. Most of the owners of articles sent for them notwithstanding. Francis and John Rogers appeared at five o'clock, having waited until then in the vain hope of sunshine. They took the pictures and the china, but there was not room for the chair. Therefore they wrapped it in the tarpaulin they had brought and left it in Violet's charge—Francis saying, with his air of decent gloom, "Mrs. Finlay told me to bring the pictures first and take the chair on another load. I'll be back to-night if I can. Are *you* going to stay here, may I ask, Miss?"

"I shall stay until dark, Francis; but Judson will be here all night."

Francis turned a gloomy eye upon old Judson, who was shambling about, getting Mrs. Cody's property together.

"Thank you, Miss; but I'd rather come back if I can," said he.

"Now, I wonder," said Violet to Jimmy Hubbard, later, "I wonder what he meant by *that*."

Old Judson had gone up-stairs, the other people had gone home, and they were alone in the room.

"Ask me an easier one," said Jimmy.

"He is sober enough to-night, is n't he?" Violet asked, looking up into Jimmy's face with that anxious reliance on the masculine judgment in such matters which confirms a boy's opinion of his sex.

"Oh, straight as a string," said Jimmy, reassuringly; "but he was on a toot Thursday, if you want to know. Say, Judson, come down and light up."

Judson lighted a single burner, and listened silently to Violet's warnings and injunctions, scowling to himself. Then Jimmy and she went home. The last thing they noticed in the room was a group of the two chairs, standing on their dais, island-wise, amid a sea of crumpled wrapping-paper. Mrs. Cody's chair was undraped, but Mrs. Finlay's, in its white tarpaulin, looked like a clumsy ghost.

By this time the rain had ceased and the stars were shining. They walked to Mrs. Durham's house very cheerfully. Jimmy was prevailed upon to enter and be refreshed with tea. Perhaps an hour had passed before they were startled by the clangor of bells.

"Fire!" cried Violet.

"Hope it ain't *us*!" said Jimmy, with more good-will than grammar.

The Wrenham fire-bells rang in a startling but not systematic fashion, as fast as they could go; and the fire companies — volunteers, mostly of tender years — assembled in their respective engine-houses, and ran about the streets inquiring for the fire until it made enough headway to be seen. The bells themselves afforded no clew. Jimmy ran out into the street for information, at the same time yelling "Fire!" at the top of his voice. "Fire! fire! Say, Mister, where 's the fire?"

"Cass street," yelled back a running boy; "Cody's old grocery store."

"Mercy!" cried Mrs. Durham from the doorway, "the museum! Violet" —

But Violet was gone. With the first word she had sped swiftly after Jimmy, nor did she stop until they saw the smoke pouring out of the museum windows.

"Mrs. Finlay's chair!" she gasped; "Jimmy, we *must* save it!"

“All right,” said Jimmy; “just you wait!” He dashed through the crowd that shouted after him: “Come back!” “The door’s locked.” “It’s all afire!” Unheeding, he unlocked the door — he had his mother’s key with him — and ran into the smoke. Horrible smoke it was — dense, blinding, stifling. His eyes were stung; his ears stunned; the murky air seemed to roar all about him. But he saw the white tarpaulin through his smoky tears, and staggered up to it. Somebody caught the other side: they dragged the chair out together — not a second too soon, for the wainscoting of the room was blazing. Safe on the sidewalk, he saw that his unknown helper was Violet, who said: —

“We’re a couple of fools, but we’ve saved the chair. Now, let us get it out of the way!”

They carried it across the street just in time to avoid the charge of a fire company. They came with a rush and a cheer, and with their coming the whole street brightened into a kind of lurid gayety. The flames leaped up in the museum windows. Up-stairs, where the fire had started, they were all aglow. In the street, the boys were shouting, the water splashing, the firemen swearing, and apparently everybody ordering somebody else to do something. Violet scanned the crowd, trying to discover old Jud-

son; but she saw no sign of that aged reprobate, and began to fear he was burning up in the building. Suddenly, two men laid hands on the chair. One of them spoke — roughly, but not unkindly: —

“You ’ll have to get outer this, ma’am: they want to lay the hose here. Here, hurry up! This way!”

Resolutely clinging to the chair, Violet and Jimmy were pushed down the street.

“We ’ll have to carry the chair home ourselves, Jimmy,” said Violet; “there ’s no use trying to look for a wagon — good gracious!”

“What ’s the matter?” cried Jimmy. “Confound the fools!”

It was only that some sportive souls among the firemen had turned the hose on their comrades over the street; Violet and Jimmy, being in a direct line with the comrades, were drenched to the skin.

“Nothing but water,” said Violet; “but I never did fancy shower-baths. Jimmy, the man was right; we ’d better get away from here.”

Jimmy looked at the chair. “It ’s awful heavy; let ’s leave it in a saloon; they ’re open.”

“Never,” said Violet; “it ’s not going out of my sight again. Here, boy,” addressing a stout lad in the crowd, “I ’ll give you a dollar if you ’ll help us carry this chair home.”

“All right!” said the boy.

He grinned at Jimmy, whom he knew, and took the chair by the arm. They forced their way to the corner. The boy's stout lungs and ready profanity cleared a passage, assisted as they were by his skillful use of the chair corners as a battering-ram. Violet was a devout churchwoman, but she did not tell him not to swear; she had a desperate feeling that anything was allowable, in the present crisis, to rescue the chair. Torn, dishevelled, dripping with muddy water, the three — say rather the four, for does not the chair count as one? — emerged from the din into the quiet and starlit streets where there was no fire. Violet's own plight was deplorable. Little streams of water drained from her soaked skirts; her hat was crushed into a shapeless bunch, through an unintentional collision with a hook-and-ladder company. She had a great bruise on her cheek (side lunge of the chair), and a never explained scratch across her nose. But she was in high spirits — her wooden ward was safe! Almost jubilantly she paid the boy at Mrs. Durham's gate; she answered her mother's anxious inquiries with a kiss and a laugh.

“I've been a fireman, mamma; I've helped save portable property. Jimmy, take off the tarpaulin, please.”

Jimmy pulled it off with a flourish ; then he gave a shout : “ Oh, thunder ! ”

Violet uttered a deep groan. She leaned against the side of the house like one about to faint. Poor Mrs. Durham caught her in her arms.

“ Oh, it ’s nothing, mamma,” said Violet, in a hollow voice ; “ only, we ’ve made a mistake, and saved the wrong chair ! ”

I draw a veil over the remainder of the night.

The explanation is simple enough. Old Judson had beguiled the tedium of the night-watches with whiskey. After he had pretty well drowned his feeble wits, he took a notion to inspect the chairs, and put the tarpaulin on Mrs. Cody’s chair. Then he departed to get more whiskey, leaving his lighted pipe up-stairs, among the wrapping-papers. And Mrs. Finlay’s idol was ashes !

Mrs. Finlay had a headache the night of the fire, and slept undisturbed through the fire-bells. Languid but unsuspecting, she came down to a late breakfast. Tom and the boys were gone, but Francis was in waiting, looking absolutely tragic in his solemnity. Mrs. Finlay took up the Wrenham paper. Francis, with a plate of oatmeal in one hand and the cream-jug in the

other, stood watching her. "Ah!" cried Mrs. Finlay. She held the paper higher; Francis could not see her face. He made a gesture of despair with the cream-jug.

"Were you at the fire last night, Francis?" came from behind the paper.

"Yes, ma'am, I was, ma'am," said Francis, his pent-up feelings relieving themselves in a heavy and irrepressible sigh. "It ain't no use, ma'am; it's all gone! When I got there, everything was blazing. And they say, ma'am, the janitor set it afire hisself. He was a-reeling round there drunk's a lord — begging your pardon, ma'am; and he locked the door, so they could n't get in!"

Mrs. Finlay put the paper down. She might have been a shade paler, but Francis could see no change in her expression. Yet, behind this calm mask a sharp struggle was going on. This stupid and barbarous town, after railing at her and slandering her for years, had capped its exasperations by destroying her most precious possession! Her nerves tingled with irritation. But the blood of generations of Puritans did not flow in Emily Finlay's veins for nothing. She had as robust a conscience as the best of them, although it was illumined by most un-puritanic lights. After all, she reasoned, the Wrenham people had burned up their own

treasures as well as hers ; certainly, they had intended no harm.

“Miss Durham,” announced Francis, interrupting the inward colloquy between anger and justice.

“Show her in here,” said Mrs. Finlay. She remembered that Violet had opposed old Judson’s appointment, and greeted her with actual warmth.

“You see, I know all,” she said, touching the newspaper. “I am so very sorry for you.”

Violet looked pale and dejected ; she did not lift her eyes ; her voice trembled as she answered : —

“But your chair is gone ; I was down there this morning, and could n’t find even a piece of it. And we persuaded you to send it !”

“But you could n’t know what was to happen,” said Mrs. Finlay, gently ; “it was n’t your fault” —

“Master James Hubbard,” said Francis, appearing again in the door-way. Jimmy had unceremoniously followed the butler, and was at his heels. He began a carefully conned speech in breathless haste. He was sorry to come so early in the morning ; but he saw Miss Durham and wanted to come, also “because,” cried Master Jimmy, growing red in the face and forgetting his speech, “I knew she

would n't say anything about what she did, and it was all old Judson's fault, 'cause he changed the tarpaulin, and we could n't see through the smoke, and we hauled it out, and she got wet through, and the hose-cart smashed her hat, and Fritz Müller and she and me, we carried it to her house, and then, after all, it was Mrs. Cody's chair!"

Mrs. Finlay listened with evident emotion.

"Do you mean you ran into the burning building for my chair?" she cried. "Risky your lives?"

"That's about the size of it," said Jimmy. Then more in detail he recounted the night's adventures. When he finished, Mrs. Finlay turned to Violet.

"How brave you were!" she exclaimed.

"I promised to take care of the chair," said Violet, with a little rueful smile, "and you see I failed, after all."

"What could you have done more?"

"Well, we might have picked out the right chair, you know," said Jimmy, impartially; "but it was so smoky."

"You took the one with the tarpaulin; you could n't know. Believe me, I am most grateful for — why, Miss Durham!"

For Violet, overcome by the long strain on her nerves, and the reaction after a night spent

in picturing her reception, each picture portraying more humiliating explanations than the last, had sunk into a chair and turned very white. Jimmy, in distress, threw the contents of the cream-jug in her face; happily the jug was almost empty, and Mrs. Finlay instantly repaired damages with a finger-bowl.

“Don’t — bother,” implored Violet faintly; “I’m not going to — do anything. But I was so sorry, and you are so kind, and it is all so — different!”

“We thought you ’d be awful mad,” Jimmy explained, with calm suavity.

“We were unjust to you,” said Violet; “I — I think I have always been unjust to you.”

“We have been unjust to each other,” answered Mrs. Finlay. “Can’t we try all our acquaintance over again, don’t you think?”

She looked up into Violet’s face with a charming smile, but her eyes were wet; and when Violet took the hand that was extended to her, she could not speak because of the lump in her throat.

Then Jimmy, who had been absorbed in meditation, remarked: —

“Well, I guess there won’t be any trouble ’bout getting the insurance; that’s one good thing.”

Violet must either laugh or cry; it was just

as well that she should laugh. Mrs. Finlay laughed with her. "And then," said Jimmy, describing the interview to his mother afterward, "then Mr. Finlay came in, and they wanted us to sit down and have breakfast; but of course I would n't. And, mother, I'm going there to luncheon to-morrow. And I don't believe Mrs. Finlay cared much about the chair, 'cause she did n't say another word about it."

When they were all gone, Tom Finlay put his arm around his wife's waist. He was smiling; but, for once, she found nothing to quarrel with in his smile. He only said: —

"Milly, I was in the conservatory, and heard it all. I am tremendously proud of you."

"Because I was n't cross?" said Emily.
"But I had no right to be cross."

"Milly, you are a very just woman."

"Don't say that, Tom," cried his wife, with a quick movement; "I have been horrid about Wrenham and about — about Miss Durham. Tom, I wish you had told me that you asked her to marry you."

Tom opened his eyes.

"But I never did, Milly. I thought of doing it once; but I found out she liked somebody else better, so I held my tongue. Then I saw you, and was glad enough I had. Milly, you were n't" —

"Yes, I was, Tom," murmured Emily, hid-

ing her head on his shoulder; "I was just so stupid."

Tom held her close; she felt the quickened beating of his heart, and she said: —

"I shall never be — stupid about Miss Durham again. She is so nice, and she was so brave about the chair."

"The poor chair!" said Tom. "Milly, I am sorry."

Mrs. Finlay pulled her husband's head down to her own level and kissed his hair.

"If you are sorry, Tom," she whispered, "then I do not mind."

Nevertheless she is not ungrateful to the chair's memory. It is perhaps a fanciful notion, but she feels as though the chair died for her happiness. A water-color sketch of it hangs in her chamber, and she has, when she looks at it, an emotion of almost personal gratitude. She returned the insurance money (which duly came to her) to the managers of the museum, accompanying the money with a sympathetic note. The note made a favorable impression. Wrenham has come to the conclusion that Mrs. Finlay has her good points. It only remains to add that Tom Finlay has no cause to complain of his wife's coolness to the Durhams; and that James Hubbard is the proud possessor of a new and most gorgeous gold watch.

FATHER QUINNAILON'S CONVERT.

A STUDY.

IT was a very modest sign: dingy gilt letters on a rusty black ground, the entire sign being not larger in area than two feet by one; and it hung, moreover, in a helpless, one-sided, mutely-appealing fashion by a single corner nail. Why then did the handsome young man who was passing give it a vicious twist with his cane, and send the announcement of the "Office of the Woman's Suffrage Association" into the mud of the street? Being a western street, the mud was deep. "You be hanged!" muttered the young man — which, indeed, was just what the sign needed; but he did not hang it. He walked on with a little irritable laugh and turned down a side street, when, seeing no one near enough to observe him, he soon allowed the dejection of his feelings to shape his expression. The cause of his melancholy mood was that frequent disturber of a lover's peace, a quarrel with his mistress. The quarrel was no transient disagreement; it was a final rupture. Six times since the morning mail had Harold Durham

read a certain note which he then received; now he was repeating its contents from memory; certainly they showed no indecision in the writer.

I have read your letter carefully. I cannot say anything but what I have said before so often you must be tired. I do not blame you, Harold, that you are not willing to have your wife feel so differently from you; but you must not blame me, either, if I cannot give up my friends and my convictions for you. A woman has a sense of honor as well as a man, and I *cannot* do it, Harold. But I do not mean to reproach you. I never had the shadow of a claim on you, you know. You are quite free. I have sent you back your letters and your ring. And please believe that I shall always remain

Your faithful friend,

LILLIAN S. MAINE.

“Then there’s a postscript,” continued the young man, “about hoping she has n’t been abrupt and hoping I will be happy. Happy! Oh, yes.” — Here Harold broke off his reflections to scowl ferociously at a small boot-black and shout, “*No*”; but before the boy could turn he stopped him. “Yes, I do, too; only be quick about it!” He did not really want his

boots blacked (in truth they had been blacked ten minutes before this episode, for he was on his way to a friend's house), but he wanted to make amends for his harshness to a child, and some scruples concerning almsgiving forbade the easier device of a quarter. The act was trivial, yet a clew to Harold's character. He had a fervid temperament which his will kept in rigid retirement, but sometimes it escaped and hurried him into action, in which cases his atonement was prone to be as impetuous as his offense. He looked after the boy when he dashed away, having finished the merest pretense of blacking. "Poor little rat," he thought; "after all, it is harder lines for him than for me. If a man can only do something permanent for that crowd, he ought not to make a row if he does n't get all the other things he asks of life."

Pursuing this elevating strain of meditation, Harold resolved to waste no more moans over his ruined hopes, but, dismissing importunate visions of a noble, candid face and classic head, with its thick brown braids, to fix his mind upon the object of his visit to Xerxes; namely, tene-ment houses. "Drains," said Harold sternly, "drains; they must be settled!" And as a judicious initiative to the settlement of drains he leaned against a fence, and taking Miss

Maine's letter out of his pocket he proceeded to give it a seventh reading.

It is as good a time as any to draw his picture. His dress, his tall, athletic figure, his fresh complexion, and his reddish-blond beard parted in the centre lent his presence an English air, and he spoke with an English accent; he was, however, an American, the son of a Chicago pork packer and a Vermont school-teacher. His father was a jovial, shrewd, strong-willed, faithful man who had inherited a small fortune and had made it a great one. His mother was a gentle and graceful woman who had almost forgotten that she was not born rich. She had very soft, winning manners, dressed perfectly, and had the most harmoniously picturesque house in Chicago. Mrs. Durham had visited England three times; the first time she brought back her butler, the second time her coachman, the third time her invaluable housekeeper, "Becket." "Now I feel that I can *live*," she said confidentially. Harold was the only child. It was Mrs. Durham's idea to send him to England; she wanted him to go to Eton first, then to Oxford; but I believe they compromised upon Phillips Academy and Oxford.

Meanwhile Mr. Durham had retired from business under the influence of a siege of headache and his wife's entreaties, and when Harold

returned home he found him in a deplorable state of anxious laziness. Harold most unexpectedly came to his relief by plunging into philanthropy and tenement houses. Mr. Durham saw that the tenement houses paid, while Harold, who had studied architecture and sanitary science and political economy for no other purpose, as he told his father, planned the buildings.

He quite agreed with his father that the houses must be made to pay a fair interest on the money.

“ We shall do no good with it as a charity,” he used to say, “ but if we can make decent dwellings for the working classes a paying investment, we shall have plenty of people following our example. And that is what we want. We want to make these vile fire-traps and fever-holes unrentable ! ”

It will be seen that Harold had the hope as well as the courage of his opinions. One might fancy that he would have been tolerably busy, what with overseeing building, collecting rents, helping his tenants to help themselves, and writing explanations of the model tenement scheme to the newspapers ; but he was a young man of immense energy, he felt that his country as well as the poor needed him, and he took an active interest in politics. He made quite a

little oration to his father when the subject was first mentioned between them.

“What do we most need in America?” he cried. “That gentlemen should enter politics! We leave them to the lower classes, and see the scoundrelly cads who represent us in Congress! I don’t wonder they sneer at us in Europe. The class who are our natural leaders, who have the leisure to study the theory of civilization and find out what government can and what it can’t do, *they* stay at home for fear of a little mud throwing! I tell you it’s a cowardly shame!” shouted Harold, growing hot and bringing his fist down on the table with a bang.

“Well, don’t break things, dear, if it is!” said his mother, in some alarm. There was a real Palissy vase on that table and it was tottering frightfully.

Mr. Durham chuckled, but said nothing. His son’s English social tone, his vehemence, and his astounding political innocence tickled the elder man’s sense of humor. “He’s a good fellow,” thought Mr. Durham, “and he’ll get over his nonsense in a little while. Give him his head a while, and let him fool about the primaries and vote independent tickets till he’s tired. He’ll come out all right, and there ain’t a bit of danger of his being elected to anything!”

Mrs. Durham took Harold much more seriously ; his enthusiasm, to be sure, was rather alarming in a drawing-room, but that was a trifling blemish ; she admired the English tone ; Harold's sentiments, his manners, the very rising inflections of his voice at the close of his sentences thrilled her heart with an exquisite vanity ; she loved her husband, but her son was her realized ideal. At last, she felt that she could crush Mrs. Maine. A grandmother who had been a Van Rensselaer and a sister who had crossed the Atlantic eighteen times could never stand up against a son educated at Oxford, with his English training visible in every bow and audible in every question that he asked.

It was a natural consequence of such a reverie that Mrs. Durham should take Harold over to the Maines, that same evening. Harold found a tall young woman, handsome as Diana, instead of the merry little girl who had skated and climbed trees with him ten years ago. He instantly discovered that he had loved her all his life, and told her so two months later. Lily Maine had been cruel enough to doubt the duration of his feeling, and had refused to be positively his promised wife until he had known her longer ; but she had admitted what she styled a "partiality" for him and had consented to wear his ring, although she would not let

him buy her one. In short, they finally arrived at an "understanding" which was to be an "engagement" at the end of the year. Harold had never been so happy in his life; he thought Lily more charming every day.

He was not alone in this opinion; few people knew Miss Maine without feeling the subtle attraction of her mingled sincerity and sympathy. There are many sincere people in the world, and many sympathetic people; but the sincere people are apt to be disagreeable, and the sympathetic people are apt to lie, more or less. Lily, while she was absolutely truthful, knew how to be silent, and her interest in others' goodness or sorrow was too quick to need to be whipped up by her politeness. As most of us are either good or unhappy, and some of us are both, Lily's interest had a wide career before it—so wide, indeed, that Mrs. Maine shuddered over her daughter's disregard of the conventionalities. She used to discuss Lily's "eccentricity" with her second daughter, — her husband was dead, — always ending the recital of her grievances with the declaration that she could have borne anything better than "that dreadful women's rights crowd!"

Now I trust the reader perceives why Harold flung the sign of the Woman's Suffrage Association into the mire; "the cause" had torn Lily

from him. He was, on the whole, in spite of his impetuous nature, a very sweet-tempered fellow ; but he had a touch of his father's doggedness, and he cherished his few prejudices. The son of his mother could hardly help having an intense dislike to anything harsh or coarse in a woman ; by an easy transition his dislike was transferred to a movement which seemed to him an effort to make all women harsh and coarse. I fear a visit which he made the previous year (I am writing of 1879) to Washington, and the glimpse he there had of the workings of the cause, reinforced his prejudices. There was the usual delegation of ladies in the city, to present the claims of women to the ballot before Congress. Harold attended one of their meetings. Several ladies were speaking when he entered, and because of this circumstance he could hear very little. Soon one enterprising speaker mounted a chair, a bolder spirit climbed upon the table, and the climax was reached when a strangely attired being — Harold supposed she was a woman — put a chair upon the table, clambered into the chair, and screamed her views above the uproar. Harold shrugged his shoulders and went away.

He did not know of Lily's opinions until some two months after he had asked her to be his wife. He never suspected that a girl with

so much hair could be a defender of the rights of woman, and his first intimation of such a horrible anomaly was the sight of her name in the "Times" as secretary of the Chicago branch. There is no necessity of detailing the particulars of their quarrel — for quarrel it became at last. Harold felt that Lily would have given up a whim for his sake had she loved him deeply; Lily felt that she could never again respect herself if she were to give up her principles to secure her happiness; between the feelings of both they soon came to bitter words.

"Lily, if I had heard you were a Roman Catholic I could n't have been more shocked," cried Harold, pacing the room. "It is n't so much the object as the people, such a horribly ill-bred crowd! All the crack-brained women I know are shrieking for the suffrage."

"They *are* queer, some of them," admitted Lily, half laughing and half sighing, "but you know, Harold, that in all reforms odd people come at first. You should have heard father tell of the extraordinary creatures who used to flock to the early anti-slavery gatherings. We used to entertain the brethren — such looking people as they were sometimes! And they never could eat things like other people!"

"I presume *we* shall have to entertain quite as interesting specimens," retorted Harold with

a sneer; but all the time his heart had softened over the "we," and he was sorely tempted to surrender on the spot.

However, being always on guard against his impulses, he resisted temptation and took a very dignified leave. It was the day of his departure for Xerxes. Some tenement houses in that thriving town had lately become Mr. Durham's property, and Harold was going there to superintend their transformation into the model tenements of his dreams. He told Lily that he would call on his way to the depot to say good-by. Neither Lily nor he had any reason to suspect that Dr. Jerusha Dale would call also; nevertheless he found her overshoes reposing on the tiles of the vestibule. Even we who know and respect Dr. Dale feel that she has not a prepossessing appearance. She is a tall lady, very thin but prodigiously muscular; (there is a legend current among her friends that she once knocked a rude medical student down, and it is certain that she did collar a drunken man who was beating his wife;) her dress never shows any concession to the fashion of the day, her voice is loud and her movements ungraceful; she wears her black hair short; and there is, to be frank, a kind of grimness about her whole aspect. Yet she is a woman of undoubted talent, who half starved herself

to learn her profession, and now is continually spending her knowledge upon miserable men and women who cannot pay her fees; she is said to be marvelously gentle in a sick room, and her loud voice itself was acquired in dutifully shouting at her deaf mother, whom she keeps in great comfort. Harold unfortunately knew nothing of her amiable traits. He shuddered when he saw her long form gradually emerge from a Queen Anne chair. "What an awful woman!" he thought, as he bowed. She, kind soul, who really loved Lily, thought he had a good face; and suspecting him to be Lily's lover almost immediately took her leave, although she had not been in the house ten minutes, and had come six miles through the mud and rain solely to make this one call. Harold had not the grace to recognize her consideration. He was furious when he heard her kiss Lily in the hall; and Lily on her return found him standing, hat in hand, by the door.

No, he said, with an air of distant politeness, he would not take off his overcoat; he had only come to say good-by. He was glad he was leaving her in such good hands; he hoped she would have a pleasant time during his absence; doubtless he should hear of her through the newspapers; some speech —

"Oh, dear, no," said Lily, trying to laugh,

“I am not gifted in that way. I never could write an essay when I was in school, and I should break down if I tried to read it, anyhow. It is in the drudgery of committees that I shine.”

“I shall wish you much success in committees, then,” said Harold. “Good-by.” He lifted her hand coldly to his lips, and he did not see that there were tears in her eyes.

The next day he wrote her a long letter from Xerxes. He begged her to give up such principles and friends; he made the most moving plea in his power, and wrote six pages about his love for her. Lily cried over the letter all night, and answered by an appeal to his justice. He wrote her (by the next mail) that she did not seem to consider that it was a matter of principle with him, and that he certainly never could bring himself to tolerate Dr. Jerusha Dale as one of his wife's friends. His answer was the letter which he held in his hand.

He had finished reading it now, and was listlessly looking about him. This was his first walk in that part of Xerxes. He did not admire the town. The slightly built houses, the soft coal dinginess everywhere, and the abounding mud jarred on an eye accustomed to the picturesque tidiness of English country towns. Harold never took a walk that he did not stum-

ble over some broken board in the wooden sidewalks, or have a loose board fly up in his face as he trod upon it, or sink up to his ankles in the black slime of a crossing. The number of unprotected cows, geese, and pigs which he met also amazed him; and he found stagnant pools of water in ravines close to beautifully kept lawns and handsome houses.

“Most extraordinary town!” said Harold. Montgomery Street below the railroad (which runs through the busiest part of the town, at the base of the hills — another astonishing circumstance to Harold) is not a pretty street; and St. Patrick’s Church, against whose fence he was leaning, is as severely ugly as the sternest Puritan could desire, although the cross which surmounts its unadorned stone walls and wooden roof is the symbol of the most ancient Christian faith. On one side of the church is the parochial school, a row of brick buildings with battered wooden doors and worn wooden steps. Nearer the street there is the priest’s house, a small two-story brick edifice, and in front of the house is a garden. The day on which Harold first saw it was in April, and it was ablaze with tulips.

“Pretty fine display, ain’t it?” said a man, coming up to Harold. He wore a working-man’s dress with a carpenter’s rule sticking out

of his coat pocket, and he rested two patched elbows on the fence rail as he spoke.

“ Yes, it is, my man,” said Harold ; “ whose garden is it ? ”

“ Mister Quinnailon’s, the priest here ; that ’s him now ! ”

Harold looked rather curiously at the priest, a stout old man in a threadbare black cassock, whose strongly marked, dark face showed his foreign birth ; it would have been a plain face but for the bright eyes and benevolent smile. “ How sly he looks ! ” thought Harold, whose English education had intensified the average good Protestant’s distrust of the Church of Rome.

“ Good morning,” said Father Quinnailon ; “ how is your vife zis morning ? ”

“ She ’s ’bout the same,” said the man.

The priest was picking tulips ; he handed them over the fence to the man.

“ Shall you give zem to her, please,” he said, “ and tell her zat she has my prayers.”

“ Much obliged, Mister Quinnailon,” said the man, taking the flowers. It seemed to Harold that he would have said more had he found any words to his mind, but he merely gave a short nod and walked down the street.

The priest, turning to Harold, asked him if he cared to see the garden. “ I have seen you standing here for a long time,” he said.

Harold blushed and said that he was interested in tulips.

“And you, zen, know someting of ze tulip culture, perhaps?” said Father Quinnailon, with sparkling eyes. “I do not often have such a pleasure to meet one zat cares for zat. Vill you valk in, my dear sir?”

Harold, half amused at his own complaisance, followed the priest about the garden and talked for ten minutes of tulips and Dutch culture. Then he spoke of the man who had just left them, and asked the priest if he was a good workman.

Father Quinnailon shook his head. “Zat I do not know. You see, my dear sir, I have know him but a small time. It vas zis vay. I go to veesit one of my people in a poor house on Tyler Street” —

“One of my father’s houses, probably,” interrupted Durham. “I am come to repair them.”

“Zat is good news,” said Father Quinnailon, bowing. “Eh vell, it vas zere I see Mrs. Higgins. Mrs. Barnes had ze room across her, and ven I vas to leave I see a leetle girl brushing vith a broom — so leetle a maiden vith so great a broom! — and I say, ‘My child, vat make you vith ze broom?’ Vile I talk, I hear her mother call, and I come in to find her sick,

in great distress, her husband gone to look for vork, no one to help her but ze leetle maid. So I sveep ze room for her, and we get acquainted a leetle, and I have come two other times and send her a flower or a leetle soup or such ting; but zat is all I know. She did tell me — yes — zat her husband have money saved up ven he come here, but he breaked his leg; zat vas a great expense, and she also has been long sick. But I tink dem to be good, honest people too proud to beg.”

“Then you can't recommend the man?”

“No, not as to vork, for zat I do not know. But I hope you vill see Mr. Lawrence. He is a builder and has employed him. Stay, it is but a step; if you vill but vait here I vill ask Mr. Lawrence myself.”

“No,” said Harold, “I will go; pray don't take so much trouble. They are poor, then, these Higginse?”

“Very poor, I fear, sir, but zey do not tell me; I am not of zeir profession; zey are Protestants as yourself, sir,” said the priest, with a little wistful glance up at Harold's face. (“He wants to convert me,” thought Harold.) “Zey speak but leetle to me of zeir affairs, and I vish not to intrude.”

“Certainly not,” said Harold. “I thank you for your courtesy — ah — Father; and I will wish you good afternoon.”

The old priest insisted on picking a most gorgeous tulip for him, saying, "It is so great a pleasure to give to one who knows of flowers."

"Decidedly, he means to convert me," thought Harold, walking up the hill. His single acquaintance in Xerxes had invited him to a "tea-party," a festivity of ambiguous nature, but he was told enjoyable, and to it he was now hastening. Xerxes is on the Mississippi; and as Harold stood on the Gilberts' vine-covered porch, he could see the river shining through the tender green leaves. He thought that he would write Lily of the pretty home which the Gilberts had, and how beautiful was the river; and then, with a sharp pang, he remembered that none of his friends or thoughts mattered to Lily any more. In most incongruous spirits he was ushered by his host through two handsomely and airily furnished rooms, filled with ladies in black silk and point lace. Apparently the gentlemen were all in the hall. Harold was introduced to Mrs. Gilbert, a pretty little woman with very bright brown eyes and very white hands, and so sweet a voice that Harold thought the western accent delicious. She introduced him to some fifty other women, young and old, who all asked him how he liked Xerxes. He said, with diffidence, that it seemed to him "rather muddy."

They, without exception, opened their eyes very wide and said, —

“Do you think it muddy *now*?”

“Is it possible for a place to be muddier?” cried Harold desperately, at last.

Mrs. Gilbert made a little grimace. “You are evidently fresh from some *effete* monarchy where they pave the very alleys. Mr. Durham, this is n't mud, this is fair walking; when we *are* muddy the cross streets are impassable; people don't even dare to die because they know they can't have a funeral!”

“But the farmers,” said Harold; “how do they come to town?”

“Oh, they don't come.”

“But is n't it very awkward, you know?”

“Very,” said Mrs. Gilbert placidly. “Will you sit here, Mr. Durham?”

Harold perceived that a number of small tables had appeared in the rooms, and that people were seating themselves around them. He found himself provided mysteriously with a napkin and a tiny bouquet, and seated near a very pretty girl who was equally amiable, but whom, I am sorry to say, he was never able afterward to describe. Indeed, all through the “tea,” — which was an elaborate supper, by the way, — he talked mechanically. Once only he was roused to any interest in the conversation. A lady near him was speaking: —

“I said to her right off, I could n’t help it, ‘Mrs. Hunter,’ I said, ‘you ain’t going to send Mary to the Sisters?’ ‘Well, yes,’ she said, she ‘guessed so; her father did n’t feel he could afford to send Mary East this year, and Mary had shown such a decided taste for painting they thought just for this year they would let her try the Sisters.’”

“A year!” repeated one of the listeners in a hollow voice, “a year! Six months is enough for them! She’ll come back a Romanist, Mrs. Dow.”

“Of course she will. I would n’t send a child of mine to a Romanist school if they had to grow up ignorant.”

“What I object to in the Papists,” said a gentleman opposite, “is their proselyting spirit. They are quite welcome to their superstitions for themselves, but when they come to this country for refuge and we receive them, the least they can do is to keep from forcing their religion on us. The Romanists are getting to be a political power in this country, and unless we stop their influence now, while we have the power, we shall soon find that the church of Rome has n’t lost its old persecuting spirit.”

“Oh, well,” said a stout lady near Harold, with a comfortable, tolerant smile dimpling her handsome face, “there are good people every-

where; I have seen as good Catholics as Protestants; the best cook I ever had was a Catholic. It's the priests I can't bear; the poor, deluded people I pity."

It was generally agreed that the priests were deceitful above all things, and one lady who had lately heard Edith O'Gorman darkly hinted that they were also desperately wicked. Mrs. Gilbert had been listening to the conversation in silence; at this last remark she spoke.

"You really didn't expect me to hear that and say nothing, did you?" she said laughing. "I don't know what the priests are in other countries; I've never lived there; but here in America I know they are in the main, to say the least, hard-working, devoted, honest men of irreproachable lives. I should think any one in Xerxes could see that. Look at Father O'Rourke, who does good every day he lives, who has got those wild Irish boys of his church into a literary society, and is making decent men of them; and Father Quinnailon, who is a saint if ever" —

The stout lady interrupted her to say that she always excepted Father Quinnailon. "And the Sisters of Mercy," she added.

"Who is Father Quinnailon?" asked Harold. Every one looked at Mrs. Gilbert.

"Father Quinnailon," said Mrs. Gilbert, "is

an old settler who came here when Xerxes was a village and everybody was dying of cholera. My father and mother had just come here then, and my mother had the cholera. They could n't get a house anywhere, and were thankful enough to get into a warehouse where there was a crowd of German emigrants in the same case, and half of them down with the cholera. Our furniture had not come (things came on boats then, and I believe our boat was fast on a sand bar) ; my poor mother had not a bed to lie on, only some husks and a piece of carpet, until Father Quinnailon brought his own mattress to her. Poor man, he slept on the hard floor because of it. And he used to bring her and the poor Germans who were there, too, soup and all kinds of things which he would make at home."

"They were Catholics?" said Harold.

"Catholics? They were all heretics, every soul of them. Father Quinnailon never inquired about a sufferer's religion before he helped him. And as for proselyting — look at us, who have known the dear old man all our lives and are as firm Presbyterians as you can find!"

"Yes, Father Quinnailon *is* a good man," said the stout lady. "I remember, thirty years ago, when I first came here and our house took fire, how he was up on the roof, the first man,

with his bucket; he always used to go to every fire with that bucket before we had the fire companies."

"And he was a loyal man during the war," said the gentleman who had spoken first; "give every one his due, I say. Father Quinnailon did a great deal to encourage enlistments, and I must say I liked those queer little speeches he used to make about 'supporting ze generous country zat have receive us,' when we had flag raisings."

"Well," said another gentleman, "he's likely to receive the reward of all his virtues; I hear they're going to make him bishop of the new diocese in this state."

"Yes, and the poor man is so distressed about it, Mr. Graham," said Mrs. Gilbert. "He told me of it with tears in his eyes; he said that he had written and begged them not to think of it; 'for,' he said, 'I am not a learned man, I cannot be a bishop, I am but fit to minister to the poor people.'"

"I have heard of that kind of thing in apostolic times," said Mr. Graham, "but I have never seen any clergyman who would decline promotion, myself. It is n't the salary, you understand, it's the larger opportunities of usefulness. You will find Father Quinnailon will take the same view of it."

“I don’t think so,” said Mrs. Gilbert.

“Well, I don’t think so either,” said the stout lady. “Father Quinnailon is a kind of apostolic man, if he does pray to idols and worship the Virgin Mary.”

“But he does n’t,” said Mrs. Gilbert. “I never saw a Catholic who did.”

There were several exclamations.

“Perhaps not the better classes” — began Mr. Towne.

Mrs. Dow interrupted him. “Don’t you think Romanists pray to the Virgin, Mrs. Gilbert? I know I’ve read in ‘Life and Light’ the letters from our missionaries among the Romanists, in Spain and Mexico and Austria, and they talk about the superstitious observances there.”

“I never knew any Mexicans or Spaniards,” said Mrs. Gilbert. “I have known Austrians, but they never thought of such a thing. All the Catholics I know have told me that they only pray the Virgin to intercede for them with God. They would feel it as blasphemous to pray to her directly as you or I would.”

“But I have read in ‘Life and Light,’” said the unshaken Mrs. Dow, “that some Mexicans who were converted and became Christians” —

“What were they before?” asked Harold.

“Romanists,” answered Mrs. Dow severely.

“*They* said that they used to kneel down before the Virgin’s shrine and *pray!*”

“Well, it does n’t make much difference whether they call it interceding or not,” said Mr. Towne; “they pray to her; that’s the main point.”

Mrs. Gilbert gave Harold a helpless glance, and changed the subject. Shortly after Harold made his excuses and went away.

During the two months following he was much in Xerxes. He often met Father Quinnailon, for most of his tenants were the old priest’s parishioners. From a few words of greeting they soon came to long conversations; not upon religion, but upon the people in whom they were both interested and upon the many difficulties in the way of helping the poor. Sometimes Harold would talk to Higgins, whom he had employed, about the priest. Higgins always called him “Mister Quinnailon,” which title it appeared was Mr. Higgins’ oblique protest against the errors of Rome, he being one of the best of Protestants though an indifferent Christian.

“Fact is,” he said confidentially to Harold, “since Bessie’s been sick, I’ve kinder got out of the way of going to church; now she’s better, I guess I’ll begin again. But for all that, I ain’t forgot the stories my mother used to tell

me 'bout John Rogers and all them. We had a whole book about them, full of pictures of people being burned and hung and prodded with spears and sich things; we used to be let to read in it Sunday afternoons. No, sir, no Catholic in mine! But Mister Quinnailon's an honest man, if he *is* a priest, and he's done a sight of kind things to us. I've seen him off with his coat and wash the dishes himself. And, between you and me, I guess Bessie tells him the most of her troubles. 'Don't you be letting him make you a Catholic, Bessie,' says I. 'He's making me a better Protestant, Obed,' says she; 'it ain't in me to ever be a Catholic, and he knows it, but his talks and his prayers make me feel better,' says she. He's a pretty good man, and that's what I'll stick to."

Harold also talked of Father Quinnailon to Mrs. Gilbert, although he considered her testimony biased beyond expression. Mrs. Gilbert drew her own conclusions from these conversations, and from the despondency which Harold's most strenuous efforts failed to conceal.

"He is having some trouble with his girl," said Mrs. Gilbert. "I do believe, from all his questions about Father Quinnailon and Roman Catholics, that she is one, and that's the trouble. Probably she's a new convert. If she is,

she is odious. I never knew a new convert who was n't! I confess I'm of Charles Lamb's opinion, that one should n't set one's self up to be wiser than his ancestors, but should stick to the religion he's born in, whatever it is."

Mr. Gilbert made no reply; in fact, he was taking his Sunday afternoon nap, and had not heard a word of his wife's discourse.

She was confirmed in her suppositions by Harold's next conversation. He happened to be standing at the window as a long procession of young girls, in whose gowns dark red predominated, brightened the dingy street, four familiar black-robed figures leading the procession, four more guarding the rear. Harold, idly watching them, saw a merry young face turned towards him with a frank smile, succeeded by a blush.

"Why, there's Mamie Hunter!" exclaimed Mrs. Gilbert. "How shocked Mrs. Dow would be to see her! You remember her dread of the Sisters' influence?"

"Don't you think they *do* try to proselyte?" Harold said.

"Very likely. They are human, and they believe their faith is the only sure foundation for goodness and happiness. I know Protestant girls' schools do their best to give their religious character to their scholars. The one I went

to — and there is a better nowhere! — made a tremendous assault on a girl's sensibilities."

"Nevertheless you must admit that the whole tone of Protestants is more tolerant than that of Catholics."

"Yes, I suppose so. I have been told so from my youth up; but individually, I confess the Catholics I have known have shown a broader charity towards Protestants than the Protestants have shown to the Catholics. One of my dearest friends is a devoted Catholic; she knows a great deal more than I, with my two babies, can ever hope to achieve; and she is the best, the sweetest, the most truthful, and the truest girl I ever knew. I have known her ten years; I love her, and she loves me; but in all that time I never heard a word from her in praise of her church or in disparagement of mine. And though my other Catholic acquaintances are n't such absolute angels as she, I can say the same thing of them. There are plenty of bigoted Catholics, of course, but I think they are mostly among the uneducated people; and I don't think *they* make the most tolerant Protestants."

Harold shrugged his shoulders. "They talk like angels of light, now, but wait until they are stronger politically" —

"I don't know much about politics," inter-

rupted Mrs. Gilbert, "but I do know that if the Protestant creed is driven out of America, it will be because it is not fit to stay, and deserves to go! But I confess I see no signs of such things, and I do see that there is — what do you call it? — a reflex influence. If the Catholic Church is affecting America, so is America affecting the Catholic Church. And I actually, do you know, am such a lukewarm Protestant that I can conceive of them both doing each other good."

Harold smiled and said that she was too clever for him. He did not pursue the subject; he was in no humor for argument; indeed, in those days he was abjectly miserable.

"The Rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the Rose ;
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare ;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair ;
The sunshine is a glorious birth ;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth."

Harold still has the old memorandum book in which he copied this stanza one day when he was particularly despondent; and it is the best record of his feelings. Every passing interest seemed to fling a chain of associations to grapple Lily's image to his thoughts. When he

picked the first anemone, in a ravine, he wanted to tell her how much earlier the flowers came to him than to her; when Mrs. Barnes's little Annie sickened with a baleful something, supposed to be small-pox but proving no worse than measles, he longed to pour out his relief to her; when he settled the drain plans to his satisfaction, he longed as much to impart his pleasure; when he went to church, even, he could not sit in his pew without seeing again the light streaming through the rich hues of the stained window on the oval of her cheek and her beautiful hair, without feeling again the stir of a tender dream in his heart. A hundred pretty conceits assailed his fancy, and he had never in the whole time of their friendship compared her to so many fair and adorable objects as he did during those two unhappy months. He went back and forth from Xerxes to Chicago, but he saw nothing of the Maines, and he found his existence duller every day.

Mrs. Gilbert became quite settled in her theory of the something on his mind.

"My dear Jim," she remarked to Mr. Gilbert, — who "did n't see anything out of the way in Durham," — "my dear Jim," she said, with that air of compassionate moderation which in a woman denotes that she has given up trying to sound the depths of masculine ob-

tuseness and feels no longer irritation but pity, "did you ever know a man who wasn't deaf and didn't have something on his mind hear so little of what was said as Mr. Durham does? He is always saying, 'I beg pardon!' in his horrid English way." She declared that he was growing thin; and a second time confided her explanatory romance to her husband. He burst into a great, rude, unbelieving laugh, and shouted out that he would tell Harold; a threat which, Mrs. Gilbert afterward said, fairly sent cold chills through her.

But Harold was not told, and unconsciously went his dismal way, working much harder than was good for him and sleeping much less. Oddly enough, it may seem, he found his greatest comfort in Father Quinnailon's friendship. The old man's simple and loving heart from the first had warmed to him, and Harold, though thinking himself mighty cynical at present, had a nature easily touched by genuine kindness. He took a languid pleasure in helping the priest's little charities, or sending him rare plants for his garden, or sometimes driving him along the beautiful river shore, to see a sick child or an aged woman who lived too far from the church to come often to the services. They spoke French together on these drives. The priest was only the son of a peas-

ant, and spoke quite frankly of his humble origin. His father and mother had long been dead; he had no nearer relatives living than aunts and cousins, whom he had never seen; but he never wearied talking of his native village and the old *curé* who had been his first teacher.

“He is dead, too,” he said; “so many are dead! It is lonely to be an old man, my son.”

Harold found it decidedly difficult, about this time, to keep his distrust of the Roman Catholic clergy as active as behooved a stanch Protestant. However, he thought of bloody Mary and the Spanish Inquisition and the Machiavelian wiles of the Jesuits, and he held his liking for Father Quinnailon well in check until one day nearly two months after his arrival in Xerxes. It was a May day, in the morning; there had been a rain during the night, and the sidewalks, the piles of brick, and the loose boards scattered over the grass were steaming in the sun. Some women were washing clothes; they had stretched a rope from one tree to another, directly above the hod-carrier's path, so that the red and yellow flannels flapped against the hods. A few bare-legged little children were wading through the wet jimson weeds which bordered the sidewalk, and their laughter mingled with the shrill clangor

of the blue jays in the tree tops. Harold looked and listened and only half heard Higgins who was talking to him.

“There’s the new bishop,” said Higgins, suddenly.

Harold saw Father Quinnailon approaching; he walked more slowly than was usual with him, and his head was bent.

“Is he to be bishop?” asked the young man.

“Yes, they done it at last, after hanging fire three months, made the new diocese and he’s appointed; only needs the Pope’s approval now.”

Harold stroked his moustache to hide a sneer. “Larger opportunities for usefulness, I fancy,” he muttered to himself. Then half ashamed of his thought, he cordially greeted the old priest, whom he had not seen for a week as he had been in Chicago. Father Quinnailon was looking sadly ill.

“You have heard?” he said anxiously, in French.

“I have heard only good news,” Harold replied; “that you are to be bishop.”

“It is that, it is that,” cried the priest, sighing heavily; “for see, my son, I have fasted, I have prayed, but it is still the same to me. I would give up my people, with whom I have been so long, whom I love so dearly, if I could

be a bishop; but I am a simple old man, not fit for such a high office. I should make mistakes; I should make the people to laugh at our holy religion. I have written. It is pain to me to write, who write so poorly; but I have written many — three — four — letters, I have besought them. But they will not heed me. There remains one thing only. I have sold the little that I have, and my people out of their poverty will give me some little more, and I will go to the Holy Father. It is not much which I need; I can live on little things — soup, good black bread that I have eaten as a lad; and I do not care to ride in the grand coaches like nobles; I shall have enough. There I shall go; I will fall at the feet of the Holy Father, and beseech him not to make a bishop out of a poor, simple old man who cannot bear so great a burden; but to let me come back and die among my dear people!”

The priest had clasped his hands, and the tears were rolling down his cheeks; the women who had drawn near were rubbing their eyes, although they could not understand a word. Harold, uttering an inarticulate exclamation, strode off through the grass. Before the priest could speak he strode back again, and began to shake the old man's hand.

“Father Quinnailon,” he cried, “I respect

you from the bottom of my heart; you are a good man! Yes, if I am a heretic you mustn't refuse it!" He thrust a bill into the priest's hand; and in spite of bloody Mary and the Inquisition and the Jesuits, — not to mention two German farmers and the six women hanging out clothes, — he took off his hat and bowed his head to the priest's blessing.

"May God bless you, my son; I will not refuse the gift of a generous heart. And may God bring us to meet again in this world, if it be His will; but if not, may He bring you and me to worship Him in Heaven with all his Saints, by the way He sees best."

Then Harold actually ran away, followed by the women's voluble blessings.

He was one of the multitude who gathered at the *dépot* the next morning to see Father Quinnailon start on his long journey. Mrs. Gilbert described the scene to James.

"Never was there such time of weeping and wailing! Father Quinnailon cried and the people cried and the babies just howled! In the midst of all this grief I managed to lose my handkerchief, and you've no idea, Jim, how awkward it is to have nothing but your gloves to cry on! I thought of borrowing Mr. Durham's, — he was there, — but he looked so grand and glum and so dreadfully well dressed

that I felt it was quite too much to ask, so I sniffed and winked and choked and got on as well as I could without it. I saw him going into St. Patrick's, when I came home; whatever do you suppose he was doing?"

Harold himself could hardly have answered her question. He saw the church doors standing open, and obeying an impulse whose depth he did not gauge, he entered. He had never been in the church before. Evidently it was a church of the poor; the worn pine pews, the colored lithographs representing the Saviour's passion, which were the only ornaments of unpainted walls, the wooden crucifix above the high altar, the white wooden steps to the altar crowded with votive offerings of the cheapest artificial flowers, the lace paper fringing the altar steps; all told of stinted purses. Yet in their careful neatness there was a touch of pathos to Harold; it was as though the sacred symbolism of altar and cross had made the mean material precious. While he was musing thus, two women came down the aisle and knelt in a pew near him. One of them was a very old woman with a grotesquely wrinkled and withered face, shaded by a huge white cap like the caps in Sir Joshua Reynolds' portraits, only the crown had somehow shrunken to a scanty bag. The other woman was still

young; she carried a heavy basket, and there was a bruise on her cheek. Both were very poorly dressed, and both prayed devoutly. Harold watched them for a few moments, and then walked softly out of the church. He was about to put a piece of silver in the box at the door when he perceived another man there, hand extended; and the man turning, to his infinite amazement he saw the features of that sturdy enemy of the Scarlet Woman, Mr. Obed Higgins. They wore a singular expression of shamefaced emotion. Higgins made a sign with his forefinger implying a desire for further communication, and tiptoed out to the sidewalk.

“I didn't suspect you of generosity in that quarter, Higgins,” said Harold.

Higgins rubbed his forehead. “Well now, Mr. Durham, wa'n't you there, yourself? You can't say he wa'n't a good man; and I hadn't no other way of showing I appreciated what he done for Bessie; and anyhow, 'tain't for the church, if I rightly understand it,—it's for the poor.”

“I don't blame you, Higgins,” said Harold, and walked away.

We do not often understand what it is that, in the slow changing of our judgments and ideals, completes the transmutation and turns

chaos into form; but often we can remember the moment when the new powers demanded their first hearing. Harold always remembered the May morning on which he owned to himself that he had been gravely unjust.

“In short, I have been a bigot,” said he; “because I thought the Catholic faith was a remnant of the Dark Ages, and because I believe it politically dangerous, I, who belong to the party of toleration, could n’t tolerate their coming here and trying to disseminate their belief just as I try to disseminate mine. I have judged people solely on the evidence against them, without listening to what they might have to say for themselves; I have had mean suspicions of a kind old man; I have n’t done justice, much less shown mercy; it’s a disgusting fact, I’m a bigot.”

He was walking up the hill. The air was very soft, and the sky was unfathomably clear, and the river, in the sunlight, took on blue and silver tints which he had never noticed before. He saw a violet growing amid the long grass close to a fence and picked it; he had told Lily often that she was a violet rather than a lily. A great wave of remorseful tenderness swept over Harold’s heart, and washed it clean from any taint of bitterness or selfish pride. “Oh, my love,” he whispered to the little

flower, "have I been unjust and cruel to *you*? By Jove, I'm not only a bigot but a snob; I needed Father Quinnailon to take the worldliness out of me. What right had I to ask Lily to give up her principles? It was just the same conceited stuff as my wanting those poor creatures in the church to give up the religion which helps them to bear their hard lives!"

The sequel to meditation of this sort is easy to imagine. Harold wrote nine letters, which he tore up into such small pieces as to give much trouble to the chambermaid when she read them; and then he took the evening train for Chicago.

At nine o'clock upon the following morning he met Lily at the door of her mother's house; to be exact, her hand was on the door-knob. The young people looked at each other; and Harold, after a night spent in the composition of penitent speeches, found nothing better to say than, —

"Lily, can you forgive a fool?"

"If I had been a fool, too, and — and I — loved him, I might," said Lily.

What is there left to add? I have no doubt that Harold will learn to admire all Dr. Jerusha Dale's virtues, but I doubt much if his mother ever will like her. Father Quinnailon succeeded in his mission, and his memories of

Rome and the Pope's kindness will make the rest of his days bright. Perhaps I should add that the Gilberts were present at Harold's wedding; Mrs. Gilbert was very pretty and very jubilant, saying to her husband, "You may remember, Jim" —

"I remember you said Durham was sweet on a Roman Catholic," said the rude James, "and you hoped Father Quinnailon would convert him to toleration."

"Well, he did convert him to tolerating something a great deal worse than the Catholics, who do dress like other people, however bad their hearts may be! James, do you know, I think conversion's like archery; of course you mean to hit the gold, but you are glad if you get your arrow anywhere in the target!"

A COMMUNIST'S WIFE.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE.

THE Countess von Arno was Mr. Seleigman's confidential clerk. Not that M—— smiled over any such paradox; the countess called herself simply Mrs. von Arno.

M—— is a picturesque town on the Mississippi, devoted in general to the manufacture of agricultural implements. The largest plow-factory is Seleigman's: he does business all over the world. A clerk who wrote French, German, and Italian fluently was a godsend. This clerk, moreover, had an eminently concise and effective style, and displayed a business capacity which the old German admired immensely. As much because of her usefulness as the modest sum she was able to invest in the business, he offered her a small share in it four years after she first came to M——. She had come to M—— because Mrs. Greymer lived there. Therese Greymer had known the countess from her school-days. When her husband died she came back to her father's house,

but spent her summers in Germany. Then old Mr. Dare died suddenly, leaving Therese with her little brother to care for, and only a few thousand dollars in the world. About this time the countess separated from her husband. "So I am poor," said she, "but it will go hard if I can't take care of you, Therese." Thus she became Mr. Seleigman's clerk. M—— forgave her the clerkship, forgave her even her undoubted success in making money, on account of Mrs. Greymer. It had watched Therese grow from a slim girl, with black braids hanging down her white neck as she sat in the "minister's pew" of the old brick church, into a beautiful pale woman in a widow's bonnet. Therese went now every Sunday to the same church where her father used to preach. The countess accompanied her most decorously. She was a pagan at heart, but it pleased Therese. In church she spent her time looking at her friend's profile and calculating the week's sales.

The countess had a day-dream: the dreams which most women have, had long ago been rudely broken for her, and the hopes which she cherished now had little romance about them. She knew her own powers and how necessary she was to Seleigman; some day she saw the firm becoming Seleigman & Von Arno, the

business widening, and the plows, with the yellow eagle on them, in every great city of Europe. "Then," said the countess to herself, standing one March morning, four years after she had first come to M——, by the little dining-room window — "then we can perhaps persuade the workmen to buy stock in the concern, and have a few gleams of sense about profits and wages."

She lifted one arm above her head and rested her cheek against it. Otto von Arno during his brief period of fondness had been used to call his wife "his Scandinavian goddess." She was of the goddess type, tall, fair-faced, and stately, with thick, pale gold hair, and brown lashes lifted in level lines from steady, deep-gray eyes. "Pretty" seemed too small a word for such a woman, yet "beautiful" conveys a hint of tenderness; and Mrs. von Arno's face — it might be because of those steady eyes — was rather a hard face, notwithstanding the soft pink and white of her skin, and even the dimples that dented her cheek when she smiled.

Now she was not smiling. The air was heavy with the damp chill of early spring; and as the countess absently surveyed a gravel-walk bordered by limp brown grasses and a line of trees dripping last night's frost through the fog, she saw a woman's figure emerge from the

shadows and come slowly up the walk. She was poorly dressed, and walked to the kitchen-door, where the countess could see her carefully wipe her feet before rapping.

“That must be Bailey’s wife,” she thought: “I saw her waiting for him yesterday when he came round to the shops for work. — William, my friend, you are a nuisance.”

With this comment she went to the kitchen. Lettice, the maid-of-all-work, was frying cakes in solitude. “Mrs. Greymer had taken Mrs. Bailey into the library,” she told the countess with significant inflections.

The latter went to the library. It was a tiny, red-frescoed room fitted up in black walnut. There were plants in the bay-window: Mrs. Greymer stood among them, her soft gray wrapper falling in straight and ample folds about her slender figure. Her face was turned toward the countess; a loosened lock of black hair brushed the blue vein on her cheek; she held some lilies-of-the-valley in her hand, and the gold of her wedding-ring shone against the dark green leaves.

“She looks like one of Fra Angelico’s saints,” thought the countess: “the crimson lights are good too.”

She stood unnoticed in the doorway, leisurely admiring the picture. Mrs. Bailey sat in the

writing-chair on her right. Once, probably, she had been a pretty woman, and she still had abundant wavy brown hair and large dark-blue eyes with curling lashes; but she was too thin and faded and narrow-chested for any prettiness now. Her calico gown was unstarched, though scrupulously clean: she wore a thin blue-and-white summer shawl, and her old straw bonnet was trimmed with a narrow blue ribbon pieced in two places. Her voice was slightly monotonous, but low-keyed: as she spoke her hands clasped and unclasped each other. The veins stood out and the knuckles were enlarged, but they were rather white than otherwise.

She went on with her story: "The children are so good, Mrs. Greymer; but six of them, and me not over strong — it makes it hard. We hain't had anything but corn meal in the house all this week, and the second-hand woman says our things ain't worth the carting. The children have got so shabby they hate to go to school, and the boys laugh at Willie 'cause his hat's his pa's old one and ain't got no brim, though I bound it with the best of the old braid, for I thought maybe they 'd think it was a cap. And the worst was this morning, when there was nothin' but just mush: we had n't even 'lasses, and the children cried. Oh, I did n't go to tell you all this: you know I ain't a beg-

gar. I've tried to live decent. Oh dear! oh dear!" She tried to wipe away the tears which were running down her thin cheeks with the tips of her fingers, but they came too fast. Mechanically, she put her hand in her pocket, only to take it out empty.

Mrs. Greymer slipped her own dainty handkerchief, which the countess had embroidered, into the other's hand. "You ought to have come to me before, Martha," she said reproachfully — "such an old friend as I am!"

"'T ain't easy to have them as has known you when you were like folks see you without even a handkerchief to cry on," said Mrs. Bailey. "If I'd known where to turn for a loaf of bread, I'd not ha' come now; but I can't see my children starve. And I ain't come to beg now. All we want is honest work. William has been everywhere since they sent him away from Dorsey's just because the men talked about striking, though they didn't strike. He's been to all the machine-shops, but they won't take him: they say he has too long a tongue for them, though he's as sober and steady a man as lives, and there ain't a better workman in M——, or D—— either. William is willing to do anything: he tried to get work on the streets, but the street commissioner said he'd more men he'd employed for years asking

work than he knew what to do with. And I thought—I thought, Mrs. Greymer, if you would only speak to Mrs. von Arno” —

“Good-morning, Mrs. Bailey,” said the countess, advancing. She had a musical voice, clear and full, with a vibrating quality like the notes of a violin — a very pleasant voice to hear, yet it hardly seemed reassuring to the visitor. Unconsciously, she sat up straighter in her chair, her nervous fingers plaiting the fringe of her shawl.

“I heard you mention my name,” the countess continued. “Is there anything you wish of me?”

There she came to Mrs. Bailey's assistance: “Her husband is out of work. Can't you do something with Mr. Seleigman, Helen? Bailey is a good workman.”

“He is indeed, ma'am,” added Bailey's wife eagerly, “and as sober and faithful to his work: he never slights one bit.”

“I don't doubt it,” said the countess gravely; “but, Mrs. Bailey, if we were to take your husband on, and the union were to order a strike, even though he were perfectly satisfied with his own wages, wouldn't he strike himself, and do all he could to make the others strike?” Mrs. Bailey was silent.

“A strike might cost us thousands of dollars.

Naturally, we don't want to risk one; so we have no union-men. If Bailey will leave the union he may go to hammering plowshares for us to-morrow, and earn, with his skill, twenty dollars a week."

Mrs. Bailey's face worked. "'T ain't no use, ma'am," she said desperately; "he won't go back on his principles. He says it's the cause of Labor, and he'll stick to it till he dies. You can't blame a man for doing what he thinks is right."

"Perhaps not. But you see that it is impossible for us to employ your husband. Isn't there something I can do for you yourself, though? Mrs. Greymer tells me you sew very neatly."

"Yes, I sew," said Mrs. Bailey in a dull tone, "but I'd be obliged to you, ma'am, if you'd give me the work soon: I've a machine now, and I'll likely not have it next week. There's ten dollars due on it, and the agent says he'll have to take it back. I've paid fifty dollars on it, but this month and last times was so hard I could n't pay."

The countess put a ten-dollar bill in her hand. "Let me lend you this, then," she said, unheeding the half shrinking of Mrs. Bailey's face and attitude; and then she avoided all thanks by answering Lettice's summons at the door.

“Poor little woman!” she said to Mrs. Greymer at breakfast; “she did n’t half like to take it. She looked nearly starved, too, though she ate so little breakfast. How did you manage to persuade her to take that huge bundle?”

“She is a very brave little woman, Helen. I should like to tell you about her,” said Mrs. Greymer.

“Until a quarter of eight my time is yours, and my sympathy, as usual, is boundless.”

Mrs. Greymer smiled slightly. “I have known her for a great many years,” she said, disregarding the countess’s last speech; “she went to school with me, in fact. She was such a pretty girl then! Somehow, she took a fancy to me, and used to help me with my Practical Arithmetic” —

“So called because it is written in the most unpractical and incomprehensible style: yes, I know it,” interrupted the countess.

“Martha was much brighter than I at it, anyhow, and used to do my examples. She used to bring me the loveliest violets; she would walk all the way over to the island for them. I remember I cried when her people moved to Chicago and she left school. I did n’t see her for almost ten years: then I met her accidentally on Randolph Street in Chicago. She knew me, and insisted on my going out

with her to see her home. It was in the suburbs, and was a very pretty, tidy little place, with a garden in front, where Martha raised vegetables, and a little plot for flowers. She was so proud of it all and of her two pretty babies, and showed me her chickens and her furniture and a picture of her husband. They had bought the house, and were to pay for it in six years, but William was getting high wages, and she had no fears. Poor Martha!"

"Their Arcadia did n't last?"

"No. William got interested in trades-unions,—there was a strike, and he was very prominent. He was out of work a long time, and Martha supported the family by taking in sewing and selling the vegetables. Then her third child was born, and she was sick for a long time afterward,—she had been working too hard, poor thing! His old employers took William on with the rest of the men when the strike ended, but very soon found a pretext for discharging him; and, in short, they used up all their little savings, and the house went. William thought he had been ill-used, and became more violent in his opinions."

"A Communist, is n't he?"

"I believe so. Martha with her three children could n't go out to work, but she is a model housekeeper, and she opened a little laundry

with the money she got from the sale of some of their furniture. William got work, but lost it again, but Martha managed in a humble way to support the family until William had an offer to come here; so they sold out the laundry to get money to move."

"Very idiotic of them."

"After they came here they at first lived on Front Street, which is near the river, and Martha caught the chills and fever. William soon lost his place, and they moved across the river to D——. He became known as a speaker, and things have been going from bad to worse; the children have come fast, and Martha has never really recovered from her fever; and they have had simply an awfully hard time. I haven't seen Martha for three months, and have tried in vain to find out where she lived. Poor Martha! she has never complained, but it has been a hard life for her."

"Yes, a hard life," repeated the countess, rising and putting on her jacket; "but it seems to me she has chiefly her own husband to thank for it. And six children! I have my opinion of Mr. William Bailey."

"You are hardly just to Bailey, Helen. He has sacrificed his own interests to his principles. He is as honest—as honest as the Christian martyrs, though he is an infidel."

“The Christian martyrs always struck me as a singularly unpractical set of people,” said the countess.

“Maybe; nevertheless, they founded a religion and changed the world. And, Helen, you and the people like you laugh at Communism and the complaints of the laboring classes, but it’s like Samson and the Philistines; and this Samson, blind though he is, will one day, unless we do something besides laugh, pull the pillars down on his head — and on ours.”

“He will *try*,” said the countess. “If we are wise, we shall be ready and shoot him dead.” She kissed Mrs. Greymer smilingly, and went away. Her friend, watching her through the window, saw her stop to pat a great dog on the head and give a little boy a nickel piece.

One Sunday afternoon, two weeks later, the two friends crossed the bridge to D—— to visit the Baileys. When they reached the end of the bridge they paused a moment to rest. The day was one of those warm, bright spring days which deceitfully presage an immediate summer. On the river-shore crawfishes were lazily creeping over the gravel. The air rang with the blue jay’s chatter, a robin showed his tawny breast among the withered grasses, and a “flicker” on a dead stump bobbed his little red-barred head and fluttered his yellow wings.

Beneath the bridge the swift current sparkled in the sun. Over the river, on each side, rose the hills. The gray stone of the government works was visible to the right through the leafless trees; nearer, square, yellow and ugly, stood the old arsenal. A soldier, musket on shoulder, marched along the river-edge; the cape of his coat fluttered in the breeze, and his slanting bayonet shone like silver. Before them lay D——, the smoke from its mills and houses curling into the pale blue air.

The countess drew a long breath; she had a keen feeling for beauty. "Yes, it is a lovely place," she said. "The hills are not high enough, but the river makes amends for everything. But what are those hideous shanties, Therese?"

"Are they not hideous?" said Mrs. Greymer. "They are all pine, and it gets such an ugly dirt-black when it is n't painted. The glass is broken out of the windows, and the shingles have peeled off the roofs. When it rains the water drips through. In spring, when the river rises, it comes up to their very doors; one spring it came in. It is not a nice place to live in."

"Not exactly; still, I suppose people do live there."

"Yes, the Baileys live there. You see, the rent is low."

The countess lifted her eyebrows and followed Mrs. Greymer without answering. Some sulky-looking men were smoking pipes on the doorsteps, and a few women, whose only Sunday adorning seemed to have been plastering their hair down over their cheeks with a great deal of water, gossiped at the corner. Half a dozen children were playing on the river-bank.

“They fall in every little while,” Therese explained, “they are so small, and most of the mothers here go out washing. This is the Baileys’.”

William Bailey answered the knock. He was a tall man, who carried his large frame with a kind of muscular ease. He had a square, gray-whiskered face with firm jaws and mild light-blue eyes. The hair being worn away from his forehead made it seem higher than it really was. He wore his working clothes and a pair of very old boots cut down into slippers. The only stocking he had was in his hand, and he appeared to have been darning it. Close behind him came his wife, holding the baby. The bright look of recognition on her face at the sight of Mrs. Greymer faded when she perceived the countess. Rather stiffly she invited them to enter.

The room was small and most meanly furnished, but it was clean. The walls were dingy

beyond the power of soap and water to change, but the floor had been scrubbed, and what glass there was in the windows had been washed. There were occasional holes in the ceiling and walls where the plaster had given way; out of one of these peered the pointed nose and gleaming eyes of a great rat. Judging from sundry noises she heard, the countess concluded there were many of these animals under the house, though what they found to live on was a puzzle; but they ate a little of the children now and then, and perhaps the hope of more sustained them. A pale little boy was lying on a mattress in the corner, covered with a faded blue-and-white shawl.

Therese had mysteriously managed to dispose of the basket she had brought before she went up to him and kissed him, saying, "I am sorry to see Willie is still sick."

"Yes," said Bailey, smiling bitterly. "The doctor says he needs dry air and exercise; it's damp here."

"Tommy More has promised to lend us his cart, and Susie will take him on the island," Mrs. Bailey said hastily; "it's real country there."

"But you have to have a pass," answered Bailey in a low tone.

"Any one can get a pass," said the countess;

“but if you prefer I will ask the colonel to-day, and he will send you one to-morrow.”

For the first time Bailey fairly looked the countess in the face; his brows contracted, he opened his lips to speak.

“Oh, papa,” cried the boy in a weak voice trembling with eagerness, “the island is *splendid!* Tommy’s father works there, and they’s cannon and a foundry and a *live eagle!*”

“Yes, Willie dear,” said his father, as he laid his brown hand gently on the boy’s curls. He inclined his head toward the countess. “I’ll thank you,” he said gravely.

The countess picked up a pamphlet from the table, more to break the uncomfortable pause which followed than for any other reason. “Do you like this?” she said, hardly reading the title.

“I believe it,” said Bailey; “I am a Communist myself.” He drew himself up to his full height as he spoke. There was a certain suppressed defiance in his attitude and expression.

“Are you?” said the countess. “Why?”

“Why?” cried Bailey. “Look at me! I’m a strong man, and willing to do any kind of work. I’ve worked hard for sixteen year; I’ve been sober and steady and saving. Look what all that work and saving has brought me! This

is a nice place for a decent man and his family to live in, ain't it? Them walls ain't clean? No, because scrubbing can't make 'em. The grime's in the plaster; yes, and worse than grime — vermin and disease sech as 't ain't right for me to mention even to ladies like you, but it's right enough for sech as us to live in. Yes, by G——! to *die* in!" He was a man who spoke habitually in a low voice, and it had not grown louder, but the veins on his forehead swelled and his eyes began to glow.

"It is hard, truly," said the countess. "Whose fault is it?"

"Whose fault?" Bailey repeated her words vehemently, yet with something of bewilderment. "Society's fault, which grinds a poor man to powder, so as to make a rich man richer. But the people won't stand this sort of thing forever."

"You would have a general division of property, then?"

"Indirectly, yes. Power must be taken from bloated corporations and given to the people; the railroads must be taken by government; accumulation of capital over a limited amount must be forbidden; men must work for Humanity, and not for their selfish interests."

"Do you know any men who are working so?"

“I know a few.”

“Mostly workingmen?”

“All workingmen.”

“Don’t you think a general division of property would be for *their* selfish interests?”

“I don’t call it selfish to ask for just a decent living.”

“I fancy the chiefs of your party would demand a great deal more than a bare decent living. Mr. Bailey, the rights of property rest on just this fact in human nature: A man will work better for himself than he will for somebody else. And you can’t get him to work unless he is guaranteed the fruits of his labor. Capital is brain, and Labor is muscle, but the brain has as much to do with the creation of wealth as muscle: more, for it can invent machines and do without muscle, while muscle cannot do without brain. You can’t alter human nature, Mr. Bailey. If you had a Commune, every man would be for himself there as he is here: the weak would have less protection than even now, for all those restraints of morality, which are bound up inseparably with rights of property, would have been thrown aside. Marx and Lasalle and Bradlaugh, clever as they are, can’t prevent the survival of the fittest. You knock your head against a stone wall, Mr. Bailey, when you fight society. You

have been knocking it all your life, and now you are angry because your head is hurt. If you had never tried to strip other men of their earnings because you fancied you ought to have more, as skillful a blacksmith as you would have saved money and been a capitalist himself. Supposing you give it up? Our firm will give you a chance to make plowshares and earn twenty dollars a week if you will only promise not to strike us in return the first chance you get."

The workingman had listened with a curling lip. "Do you mean that for an offer?" he said, in a smothered voice.

"I mean it for an offer, certainly."

"Oh, William!" cried his wife, turning appealing eyes up to his face.

He grew suddenly white, and brought his clinched hand heavily down on the table. The dishes rattled with the jar, and the baby, scared at the noise, began to scream. "Then," said Bailey, "you may just understand that a man ain't always a sneak if he *is* poor; and you can be glad you ain't a man that's tempting me to turn traitor."

"I am sure my friend did n't mean to hurt your feelings," Mrs. Greymer explained quickly, giving the countess that expressive side-glance which much more plainly than words says,

“Now you *have* done it!” Mrs. Bailey was walking up and down soothing the baby: the little boy looked on open-eyed.

“I am sorry if I have said anything which has seemed like an insult,” said the countess; “I certainly did n’t intend one. Perhaps after you have thought it all over you will feel differently. You know where to find me. Good-evening.”

She held out her hand, which Bailey did not seem to see, smiled on the little boy and went out, leaving Mrs. Greymer behind.

A little girl with pretty brown curls and deep-blue eyes was making sand-caves on the shore. The countess spoke to her in passing, and left her staring at her two hands, which were full of silver coin. At the bridge the countess paused to wait for her friend. She saw her come out, attended by Mrs. Bailey: she saw Mrs. Bailey watch her, saw the little girl give her mother the money, and then she saw the woman, still carrying her baby in her arms, walk slowly down the river bank to where a boat lay keel uppermost like a great black arrowhead on the sand. Here she sat down, and, clasping the child closer, hid her face in its white hair.

“And, upon my soul, I believe she is crying,” said the spectator, who stopped at the com-

mandant's house and obtained the pass before she went home.

On Monday, Mrs. Greymer proposed asking little Willie Bailey to spend a week with them. The countess assented, merely saying, "You must take the little skeleton to drive every day, and send the livery-bills to me."

"Then I shall drive over this afternoon if Freddy's sore throat is better," said Mrs. Greymer.

But she did not go: Freddy's sore throat was worse instead of better, and his sister had enough to do for some days fighting off diphtheria. So it happened that it was a week before she was able to go to D——. She found the Baileys' door swinging on its hinges, and a high-stepping hen of inquisitive disposition investigating the front room: the Baileys had gone.

"They went to Chicago four days ago," an amiable neighbor explained; "they did n't say what fur. The little boy he cried 'cause he wanted to go on the island fust. Guess *he* ain't like to live long; he's a weak, pinin' little chap."

Only once did Therese hear from Mrs. Bailey. The letter came a few days after her useless drive to D——. It was dated Chicago, and expressed simply but fervently her gratitude

for all Mrs. Greymer's kindness. Inclosed were three one-dollar bills, part payment, the writer said, "of my debt to Mrs. von Arno, and I hope she won't think I meant to run away from it because I can't just now send more." There was no allusion to her present condition or her prospects for the future. Mrs. Greymer read the letter aloud, then held out the bills to the countess.

She pushed them aside as if they stung her. "What does the woman think I am made of?" she exclaimed. "Why, it's hideous, Therese! Write and tell her I never meant her to pay me."

"I am afraid the letter won't reach her," said Mrs. Greymer.

Nor did it. In due course of time Therese received her own letter back from the Dead-Letter Office. The words of interest and sympathy, the plans and encouragement, sounded very oddly to her then, for, as far as they were concerned, Martha Bailey's history was ended. It was in July the countess had met them again. She was in Chicago. Otto was dead. He had given back to his wife by his will the property which had come to him through her, — whether because of a late sense of justice or a dislike to his heir, a distant cousin who wrote theological works and ate with his knife, the countess

never ventured to decide. The condition of part of this property, which was in Chicago, had obliged her to go there. She arrived on the evening of the fifteenth of July — a day Chicago people remember because the great railroad strike of 1877 reached the city that day.

The countess found the air full of wild rumors. Stories of shops closed by armed men, of vast gatherings of Communists on the North Side, of robbery, bloodshed, and — to a Chicago ear most blood-curdling whisper of all — of a contemplated second burning of the city, flew like prairie-fire through the streets.

The countess's lawyer, whom she had visited very early on Thursday morning, insisted on accompanying her from his office to her friend's house on the North Side. On Halstead Street their carriage suddenly stopped. Putting her head out of the window, the countess perceived that the coachman had drawn up close to the curbstone to avoid the onset of a yelling mob of boys and men armed with every description of weapon, from laths and brickbats to old muskets. The boys appeared to regard the whole affair as merely a gigantic "spree," and shouted "Bread or Blood!" with the heartiest enthusiasm; but the men marched closer, in silence, and with set faces. The gleaming black eyes,

sharp features, and tangled black hair of half of them showed their Polish or Bohemian blood. The others were Norwegians and Germans, with a sprinkling of Irish and Americans. Their leader was a tall man whom the countess knew. He had turned to give an order when she saw him. At that same instant a shabby woman ran swiftly from a side street, and tried to throw her arms about the man's neck. He pushed her aside, and the crowd swept them both out of sight.

"I think I have seen a woman I know," said the countess composedly; "and do you know, Mr. Wilder, that our horses have gone? Our Communist friends prefer riding to walking, it seems." They were obliged to get out of the carriage. The countess looked up and down the street, but saw no trace of the woman. Apparently, she had followed the mob.

By this time some small boys, inspired by the occasion, had begun to show their sympathy with oppressed labor by pelting the two well-dressed strangers with potatoes and radishes, which they confiscated from a bloated capitalist of a grocer on the corner. The shower was so thick that Mr. Wilder was relieved when they reached the Halstead street police-station, where they sought refuge. Here they passed a sufficiently exciting hour. They could hear

plainly the sharp crack of revolvers and the yells and shouts of the angry mob blending in one indistinguishable roar. Once a barefooted boy ran by, screaming that the police were driven back and the Communists were coming. Then a troop of cavalry rode up the street on a sharp trot, their bridles jingling and horses' hoofs clattering. The roar grew louder, ebbed, swelled again, then broke into a multitude of sounds — screams, shouts, and the tumultuous rush of many feet.

A polite sergeant opened the door of the little room where the countess was sitting to inform her the riot was over. They were just bringing in some prisoners: he was very sorry, but one of them would have to come in there. He was a prominent rioter whom they had captured trying to bring off the body of his wife, who had been killed by a chance shot. It would be only for a short time: the gentleman had gone for a carriage. He hoped the lady would n't mind.

The lady, who had changed color slightly, said she should not mind. The sergeant held the door back, and some men brought in something over which had been flung an old blue-and-white shawl. They carried it on a shutter, and the folds of a calico dress, torn and trampled, hung down over the side.

Then came two policemen, pushing after the official manner a man covered with dust and blood.

“Bailey!” exclaimed the countess. Their eyes met.

Bailey bent his head toward the table where the men had laid their burden. “Lift that,” he said hoarsely.

The countess lifted the shawl with a steady hand. There was an old white straw bonnet flattened down over the forehead; a wisp of blue ribbon string was blown across the face and over the red smear between the eyebrow and the hair; the eyes stared wide and glassy. But it was the same soft brown hair. The countess knew Martha Bailey.

“There was women and children on the sidewalk, but they fired right into us,” said Bailey. He spoke in a monotonous, dragging voice, as though every word were an effort. “They killed her. I asked you to give me work in your shop, and you wouldn’t do it. Here’s the end of it. Now you can go home and say your prayers.”

“I don’t say prayers,” answered the countess, “and you know I offered you work. But don’t let us reproach each other here. Where are your children?”

“Ain’t you satisfied with what you have done

already?" said Bailey. "Leave me alone; you'd better."

"Gently now!" said one of the policemen.

"Whatever you may think of me," said the countess quietly, "you know Mrs. Greymer was always your wife's friend. We only wanted to help her."

Bailey shook off the grasp of the policeman as though it had been a feather: with one great stride he reached the countess and caught her roughly by the wrist. "Look at *her*, will you?" he cried; "you and the likes of you, with your smooth cant, have killed her! You crush us and starve us till we turn, and then you shoot us down like dogs. Leave my children alone."

"None of that, my man!" said the sergeant.

The two policemen would have pulled Bailey away, but the countess stopped them. She had turned pale even to her lips, but she did not wince.

"Curse you!" groaned the Communist, flinging his arms above his head; "curse a society which lets such things be! curse a religion" —

The policemen dragged him back. "You'd better go, I think, ma'am," said the sergeant; "the man's half crazy with the sun and fighting and grief."

"You are right," said the countess. She stopped at the station door to put a bill in the

policeman's hands: "You will find out about the children and let me know, please."

Mr. Wilder, who had been standing in the doorway, an amazed witness of the whole scene, led her out to the carriage. "He's a bad fellow, that rioter," he said, as they drove along.

The countess pulled her cuff over a black mark on her wrist. "No, he is not half a bad fellow," she answered, "but for all that he has murdered his wife."

Nor has she ever changed her opinion on that point; neither, so far as is known, has William Bailey changed his.

SCHOPENHAUER ON LAKE PEPIN.

A STUDY.

THE Alfred McGinnis was passing through Lake Pepin. It was six o'clock in the afternoon of a June day, 1878. On the lower deck groups of "roustabouts" were scattered among the flour barrels, at the foot of a row of monster threshing machines which glistened with red paint; the upper deck was crowded; and ten women all wearing black — not in mourning for dead kindred but because they were traveling — admired the Mississippi from the pilot-house.

The boat had rounded point No Point (whose facetious character had been duly explained by the pilot); and nothing was now to be seen save the wide stretch of steel-gray waters, softening into blue with the distance; and on either side, the high, steep hills. The ragged line of hill-tops was pierced by the underlying rock into a fantastic semblance of ruined forts and castles, or dented by vast hollows which might easily have served for amphitheatres; as though

some vanished race had here lived and fought and kept barbaric festivals. Nature subtly aided the fancy with a profusion of shrubbery flung over the crumbling walls and here and there a slender umber streak climbing up the hillside, marvelously like a foot-path.

All this landscape wore the sumptuous tints of early summer. Sombre masses of pine and dull red brown rocks intensified the effect of the yellow green of the maples and the white green of the willows and the bars of green sunlight burning along the grass between the shadows. The sun had not yet dropped below the horizon, there were no flaming hues, but the sky was filled with soft grays and silver mists floating in a sea of tender blue, and away to the southwest a dark blue circle looked out from a halo of dazzling white light.

A lady and gentleman who had just come on to the hurricane deck paused a moment to gaze at this scene. They were both young and the lady was beautiful. Her beauty was of that English type which New England has preserved, or possibly revived; there were the fair, broad brow, the pale gold hair, the mildly Roman profile, the exquisite coloring, and the charming figure of English loveliness. Usually such beauty in the American is etherealized, one might almost say attenuated; she is a thought

too slender, — often she is a thought too pale. Mrs. Berkely, the lady in question, was slender but she was not too pale; the women on the boat had said with a sigh, “What complexions those Boston girls do have!” They inferred that she came from Boston because of her erect carriage, her soft, distinct intonations, the somewhat cold reserve of her manner, and the severe elegance of her toilet, — “prim,” I think, was the word used. Nevertheless Mrs. Berkely was not a Boston girl, she was a native of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, a delightful town where they have ancestors, go to Europe at decent intervals, and play whist according to Cavendish.

Until she was twenty-three Ethel Berkely had performed most conscientiously all the duties pertaining to that station in life to which a Pittsfield girl is called, including the journeys to Europe and a trip up the Nile, which may be considered as a work of supererogation. She was, also, extremely clever and she played a strong game of whist, never hesitating to sacrifice her own hand to her partner's. When she was twenty-three she married Captain John Clarence Berkely of the United States army. Since their marriage, now some three years, they had been stationed West, and it had struck them both as a picturesque scheme to explore the upper Mississippi. Captain Berkely was

standing by his wife's side. He was rather a tall young man, thin and dark, with fine brown eyes and an unobtrusive brown mustache. Only his square shoulders and the gentle indifference of his expression betrayed the army. He wore a gray plaid traveling suit and had that appearance of having very recently attired himself which is produced by immaculately stiff and white linen. As he was using his hat for a fan, one could see that what little hair the barber had left him was parted in the centre, a fact which had already excited the unfavorable comments of the captain, the two pilots, and three fourths of the passengers of the Alfred McGinnis.

The couple had been exhaustively discussed. They were regarded (on the grounds of their youth and expensive clothing) as newly married people, and their avoidance of the boat society was charitably ascribed to the pardonable absorption of lovers. Fortunately for Ethel's peace of mind such an explanation of numerous kindly but curious glances and inquiries had never occurred to her. She was, indeed, more interested in the people whom she met than one would have imagined from her manner — one, that is, who did not know Pittsfield. At the present moment she was questioning her husband about the cabin. What were they doing, John, and who were there?

John was not interested; he looked bored. "Oh, the usual thing. There are only two new arrivals, two youthful beings from Texas on their wedding journey. They came on at Winona. She is singing, 'Tis but a Little Faded Flower,' and he sits near with his hands in his pockets, looking blissful. Then there's an old German fast asleep and some women talking about their 'hired girls,' and forward there's a Methodist minister reading his Bible."

"How do you know he is a Methodist minister?"

"The looks and the coat of him, my dear. I can always pick out the clergy. Episcopalians wear white cravats and have their waistcoats cut high, and if they are high church they have long skirts to their coats; the more 'advanced' their views the longer their coats are. Presbyterians wear white cravats but their waistcoats haven't the clerical cut. Congregationalists lean to black cravats. Unitarians are quite unregenerate in their dress, and the Methodist parson from the country you can always tell by his black alpaca coat and the frayed edges to his shirt collar. Our friend is a Methodist, peradventure a revivalist; now I think of it, he had that kind of disapproving-of-everything-in-general aspect which marks the Man in Earnest!"

“He may be a good, humble-minded man, John.”

“And read his Bible in the face of all men? Ethel, there is a natural religious modesty which he outrages. I feel convinced he is a narrow-minded prig.”

Ethel looked at her husband. He fancied that there was a slightly wistful expression in her beautiful violet eyes, but without answering she turned them again to the river and the hills; although she was so clever she was not ready of speech. He wondered what she was thinking, yet did not ask her, for they held widely divergent opinions upon some vital questions, and he rarely cared to define their differences by discussion. Ethel was the first to speak, changing the subject in the abrupt fashion of people who know each other well. “See, John, there is a little house all by itself! Should n’t you think the man who lives there must be lonely?”

“Perhaps he is fond of solitude. I should like a little box like that myself — with you!”

“Resign and have one.”

“I wonder why I don’t resign,” said Berkely moodily. “I suppose because I am not fit for anything else, and I have a weak-minded aversion to lounging about on my wife’s money. But it isn’t because I admire the way they manage things that I stay.”

“ This is the worst of possible worlds, is n't it ? ” said Ethel smiling.

“ Very nearly.”

“ Are you then so unhappy, John ? ”

“ On the contrary, if it were not for those impertinent pilot-house windows which prevent my putting my arm about your waist I should be uncommonly serene.”

Ethel shook her pretty head. “ John, you are a dreadful justification of Mr. Mallock ! You seem always shrugging your shoulders and saying, ‘ But as for me, the life that now is is not worth the living ! ’ ”

“ Well, Ismene's cynicism proved very shallow ; perhaps mine is too.” Ethel shook her head again ; there fell a little silence which the voices from the pilot-house penetrated.

“ I had a lady friend, and her husband, he was drowned. He put his life preserver around her and she seen him raise and sink, raise and sink, till he went down, and could n't do a thing ! They saved her and she 's living now, but nobody ever seen her laugh or be lively again ; and it 's ten years now ! ”

“ That was dreadful ! But do you think it jest right to be so unresigned ? ”

“ No, I don't, Mrs. Wattles ; it used to make me feel bad to be with her. I don't think people ought to grieve so ; they make everybody

'round kinder relieved like when they 're out of sight. There 's a hymn I 'm very fond of, — maybe you know it: 'Go bury thy sorrow, the world hath its share.' ”

“That 's sound doctrine,” interposed the pilot's hearty voice, “if it *is* poetry.” (“Not much poetry, if it is the hymn I know,” muttered Berkely.)

A woman's voice joined the conversation, a high-keyed, ear-disturbing voice with long-drawn falling inflections and the flat Western accent, which together made her sentences a succession of wails.

“That hymn was a great favoryte of cousin Lou's, she that went to Kansas, Mrs. Wattles. Goodness knows she 'd enough to bury out there; no wood, no water and the wind strong enough to blow the soul out of your body, living in a sod house, too, and snakes crawling round in the walls and dropping down on you in bed at night, unexpected like, rain soaking through, — when there *was* rain, — a mortgage on the farm and the 'hoppers eating up their crops bare two years running, and she with her eight children and three of them dying in one summer! I think she *did*! And then soon 's they 'd got things fixed up a little, trees planted and a well dug and a two-story frame with blinds built — *then* poor Lou has to die. And *he*

posted off to Blue Rapids, six months after, and married a girl of sixteen! Oh, the men!"

"Well, you'd have somebody enjoy that new house, wouldn't you?" said the pilot.

"No, I would n't — for the gracious sakes, Mr. Ripley, what makes this boat shake so?"

The captain had walked briskly into the pilot-house and whispered a few words to the pilot. "There is n't the least danger, ladies," he said impatiently, "we're jest going ashore, that's all."

"Is there any danger, John?" said Ethel, drawing nearer her husband.

"Not a bit of it, dear," said John, privately thinking quite the reverse and measuring the length of a possible swim with his eye. "There's the parson, though, coming up the stairway; I'll tackle him if you like and find out all about it."

He walked up to a tall, gaunt man with a prominent nose and a stiff black beard. The new-comer wore the black alpaca coat which Berkely had mentioned, and his nether garments of black broadcloth had an unintentional bagginess at the knees. He said "Hey?" in a loud voice to Berkely's first question, but the subsequent conversation was unintelligible. At all events it was reassuring, since Berkely sauntered back smiling and told his wife there was

something the matter with the machinery and they were going ashore for an hour or so to repair things. That was all.

By this time the boat was grinding against the side of an almost perpendicular bluff. To the right, the grassy wall was cleft by a deep and long ravine in which stood a small house of unpainted pine wood, the same house which Ethel had noticed a short time before. Behind the house on the flat lands was a wheat field, a rectangle of vivid green over which ran ripples of sunlight as the wheat swayed in the wind. The house door swung on its hinges, and the doorway framed the figure of a man holding a wide straw hat a little above his head. Rather to Ethel's surprise their fellow traveler in the black alpaca coat instantly waved his own hat, as if in response to a signal, and ran hastily down the stairway. A few moments later he appeared on shore, carrying a large newspaper bundle and a shabby black leather bag.

"Apparently has intentions of sojourning here," said Berkely; "do you care to go, too, Ethel?"

"I don't mind, if it's not muddy."

"Dry as Dr. Todd. Let me take your umbrella."

They found a natural foot-path and, being in

the humor, climbed to a grass overgrown ledge of rocks, half way up the bluff. There they paused to rest, saying little, but if one might judge from their attitude not dissatisfied with each other's quiet society. Finally, Berkely proposed a descent on "the hermit."

"How do you know he is a hermit?" said Ethel; "he may be an honest farmer with half a dozen children."

"No," answered a voice, so near that Berkely abruptly took his arm from his wife's waist, "no, he is as lonely as you could wish!"

"May I ask" — began Berkely haughtily, looking at the stranger who had emerged from the sheltering rocks and now stood before them.

"I came up on the other side," interrupted the man without the customary smile of explanation. "Would you like to see my place, ma'am?"

He lifted his hat as he spoke, revealing a high projecting forehead and a sallow, sunken-cheeked face. Under the shadow of his overbearing forehead, his large blue eyes looked out, veiled with an absent-minded mist. His sunburned hair and beard were so vilely cut that Berkely decided on the spot that he had been his own barber with a pair of scissors. He was short but muscular enough. His costume was a singular combination of a threadbare black

frock coat, gray flannel shirt, and blue overalls. Thus clad, and absolutely unconscious, it appeared, of the grotesqueness of his dress, he stood unsmilingly waiting Ethel's answer. Yet he seemed pleased in a sullen and repressed fashion when his invitation was accepted, and at once led the way to the house.

Ethel noticed that a vine had been trained against the side of the house, and there were pansies blooming in a little flower-bed near the door. The room which they entered was both unpainted and unplastered; a table, chairs, and stove completed the meagre list of its furniture; and its sole ornament was a black easel very neatly decorated with forget-me-nots, which held the crayon picture of a lady and child. Both the visitors glanced at the picture. The lady had a delicate, pretty face, but did not look happy although she was smiling; the child was a fine little fellow with a large forehead and eyes like the master of the house. The latter laid his hand on the frame, saying, "Do you think it a pretty picture?"

"Very," answered Berkely; "is the lady your wife?"

"She *was* my wife," said the man, "she is dead."

"Oh, I beg pardon," Berkely exclaimed.

"You need n't, you've done no harm," said

the hermit. "Won't you sit down, please? And I haven't asked you to take anything; I've some coffee on the stove and fresh bread and butter, and I'll answer for the eggs since I keep chickens myself." He set plates on the table, bestirring himself with an air of eager hospitality which his visitors' politeness could not resist.

"Besides," Berkely whispered, during a temporary absence of the hermit for eggs, "nothing *can* be worse than the boat!"

They had no reason to repent their confidence, for they found the simple fare excellent. Their host sat with them, crumbling a piece of bread but drinking nothing; perhaps he had only the two cups, Ethel said afterwards. He did not seem reluctant to speak of himself or of his lonely life. He lived by his little farm, — not his own, only rented. In summer he loaded a skiff with his wheat, and rowed to the mill six miles farther down the river; in winter he drew what few provisions he needed on a sled, skating himself. Yes, it was lonely, but he had his dog and his chickens for company. "I've seen enough of men," he said grimly.

"I fear you have had a hard life," said Berkely, "do you mind telling us something of it?"

"No," said the hermit, "I don't mind. I'll

never, most likely, see you again, and sometimes it's a relief to talk. When I saw you to-day sitting there together, so happy" (the dismay on Ethel's face was reflected in Berkely's), "I felt a sudden longing to talk again with a good woman. For four years I haven't talked — except about wheat and such things — to any man but Wesley Mitchel. I was seized with a sudden desire to have some fair-minded person judge my whole case; I'm tired of running it over in my own mind. I know all Wesley has to say — but you are different! Does this strike you as very extraordinary, ma'am?"

"No, I don't think it does," said Ethel, flushing slightly beneath her husband's curious eyes. "I think I understand — a little — what you mean."

"Thank you," said the hermit, "I will tell you the whole story. My name is Herman Witte. My parents were Germans who came to America when I was ten, and my mother died the year after. She was a good woman and her folks were well off in Germany, but she offended them by marrying father, who was only a foreman in a foundry. He was n't even that long, for he fell first into socialism and then into drink, and the upshot was he came over here — to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He got work in the iron mills there easy enough,

and he was a first-class workman, too, when he was half sober. He married another German woman after mother died; she wasn't very good, but she was good enough for him. There were seven boys of us, and we all worked in the iron works. I worked there till I was twenty, then I was converted by a Methodist preacher; and, sir, if ever a man longed and prayed and agonized to lead a better life I did. The preacher was interested in me, especially when my father knocked me down and swore he'd have nothing more to do with such a canting hypocrite. I've no doubt that to this day I'm an illustration in his sermons. He got me into a school where they give a weekly stipend to students who engage to enter the ministry; then I went to the seminary, and when the war broke out I went as chaplain. I served through the war, saw some fighting, and had a mild touch of yellow fever, but came out all right and got my first parish. It was in Iowa; I thought I'd like the West, so went there. It was in my first parish I met my wife, — her father was one of the prominent men of my church. I can't say much about my feeling for her, but if — if you've ever known anybody, sir, who seemed to represent everything pure and good and beautiful to you, making you feel like some great clumsy animal crawling out of

a slough, not fit to be in such a presence, even — you are not likely to have felt that way, but if you have ever seen anybody who seemed to be doing naturally and inevitably what you pant and struggle and fail to do, whose thoughts the angels must love to look at because there 's no soil in them, who makes you despise yourself and hope for yourself at the same time — if you have known any one like *that*, sir” —

“Yes,” said Berkely, “I have known some one like that.” He was sitting near Ethel and he laid his hand gently on hers.

The hermit looking up suddenly, smiled for the first time. “I see, I see,” he said. “Well, sir, I loved my wife as you love yours. I loved her for two years, not daring to tell her so, for I couldn't forget how I was raised; why, sir, the uncouth habits and speech of childhood and youth are sticking to me still. I was glad my family had quarreled with me, glad they 'd left Pittsburgh, glad I 'd lost all trace of them, but still there they were and I *had* belonged to them! I don't know how I dared to speak to her finally. I think it was her father's death, leaving her all alone in the world, for her mother had been dead many years and her relations all lived East. Then, Dr. Wilson had been too generous a man to die rich, and the life insurance failed because of some informality.

You know the tricks of those fellows, sir. Well, I had to tell Emily the news, and somehow I was emboldened to speak. Then — think what it was to me, ma'am — I found she loved me, and had loved me for months, *me!*” He was sitting with his head resting on his hands, talking most of the time to a crack in the table; now, by a slight movement of the shoulders, he shielded his face from view. It was a movement exceedingly suggestive.

In a moment he resumed his story, still with his elbows on the table and his head on his hands; his absurdly cut hair had fallen over his face, his position drew the waist of his coat half way up his back; on the whole, he was not a tragical figure; yet Berkely, who was sufficiently susceptible to the ridiculous, felt no inclination to smile. “We were married,” said Witte; “at first we were happy. We had a small salary, never punctually paid, and Emily’s health was poor, but we loved each other and our two children and we kept up good hearts. I am telling you the truth as nearly as I can see it, therefore I will say that I believe I was what is called a successful preacher, but as a pastor I failed. I was always fatally embarrassed with the most of my congregation. They called me stiff and pedantic and awkward. It’s likely enough that I was. A man is apt to be

stiff and pedantic who is constantly supervising his own speech and actions. Somehow, too, I never got near my people, I sympathized with them from the bottom of my heart but I was n't fortunate in expressing my sympathy, and naturally enough they did n't give me credit for what they did n't see. I tried, by hard study, to balance my deficiencies in pastoral work with fine sermons ; kept abreast of the popular thought, as the phrase is, preached on scientific skepticism, and refuted Robert Ingersoll. My congregation called me a rising man, the papers published abstracts of my sermons, making me say all kinds of things I never dreamed of, and the young men used to bring the young women to hear me in the evening. But in spite of the crowded pews and the papers and the flattering things the women said to Emily, I began to feel that I was preaching to others who was myself a castaway.

“ It was the doctrine of evolution staggered me first. The more I tried to investigate the physical basis of life the deeper I found myself in the mire, and the more impossible it seemed to accept the inspiration of the Scriptures, and the proved conclusions (to say nothing of the *probable* conclusions) of modern science. At the same time I was plunged in other difficulties. From the first I had visited the poor regularly

(I was one of them, you know), I had worked up an industrial school and established a reading-room, and my church donated to it all the worn-out books in the Sunday-school library, and a number of quite new "Lives of the Methodist Bishops," which we somehow could n't get the children to read. I got on better with the poor than with the respectable people. Yet they were stumbling blocks. They gave me an awful sense of the burden of life. There was n't anything sentimental or poetic about their suffering or their temptations, and the worst of their poverty in many cases seemed to be its apparent necessity. How are men and women ignorant, squalid, unthrifty, and reckless to be anything *but* poor? And yet when from the minute they open their eyes they see nothing about them but ignorance and dirt, how can they be anything else? I tell you, sir, my visits among the poor gave me new light on the survival of the fittest. And the poverty out West ain't a circumstance to that of the great cities East. Yes, sir, the more I saw of the world and the more in my office I explored the windings of the human heart the more I saw how we are only a very little *ourselves!* Our ancestors hold us, sir; our environment and our education build bars around us that we can't break through. There's awful little margin

for a man's individual will when you consider all these things! I looked about me and it seemed to me that everywhere the evil was strangling the good. At first I believed more implicitly than ever in the devil, then step by step, inch by inch, with an agony you can't conceive, I began to disbelieve in God. It was at this stage of my moral development, when my little boy was six and my little girl three, that the conference sent me to a town on the Mississippi, and there I met Mitchel. You have seen him; he came on your boat. Very likely you did not notice him though, or if you did, did not think much about him, for he does not prepossess strangers, but he is the best man I ever knew, the truest and the noblest! He had the Sixth Street Methodist church, for there are two Methodist churches in the place; it's a large place, though half the population are Germans who don't go to church at all. You would have thought, being in the same city, he would have felt a little bit like a rival of mine, but instead he seemed to rejoice in my success. 'You have great gifts, brother,' said he, 'great gifts; may the Lord prosper them to the saving of souls!' I liked him from the first, — he had a simple, confiding faith about him that attracted me. He was a widower with five children; poor, of course, but living

so plainly that he always had something to give and was able to exercise hospitality. 'We never make any change,' said he, 'and there's always plenty though it's plain, so I'm always glad to see my friends.' Why, sir, he brought the bishop up to his Saturday dinner, just baked beans and brown bread and a watermelon. 'The bishop is a New England man, too, Maria,' he says to his sister, 'and I've told him you are the best hand at baked beans I know.' And he sat down with his eyes twinkling over those baked beans as if they had been a grand dinner. He enjoys everything, Mitchel does; and every one else's pleasure seems like his own. And so it is with their sorrow. I had n't been with him six months before I told him something of the doubts that were eating my heart out. 'You have n't read Joseph Cook,' says he, 'he's the man for such men as you! He's too deep for me, but then God has been merciful to me and kept my faith clear, so it don't matter. You read him, brother, he is a wonderful logician.' So I read the lectures. Have you ever read them, sir?"

"Mrs. Berkely has," answered Berkely; "one volume on transcendentalism and that sort of thing was all *I* was able to bear."

"Then you know there is a kind of ponderous fascination about the man; he marshals such

an enormous array of authorities that at first you don't dare to examine anything, and his syllogisms look so imposing you don't think of asking just what the terms mean. I was carried away by him — why, my poor Emily and I used to pray every night that God would bless that man for the spiritual help he had been to me. But it is the curse of such temperaments as mine that they can't stop questioning while there's anything left. I began to ask what Cook meant in his various steps of the argument instead of simply accepting his conclusions."

"You must have had a jolly time finding out," said Berkely.

The hermit looked at him gravely. "I can't say that I rightly did find out, sir. But I became convinced there were some discrepancies in his statements. I thought I would go directly to the German philosophers he talked of. It was n't so easy to get their works, but I'd always kept up my German, and an old German lent me a stray volume of Kant, Hegel's Phenomenology and something of Schopenhauer, his essay on the Will. Then Mitchel got me some odd numbers of a St. Louis magazine that deals with German philosophy mostly, and then I found more Hegel and some Fichte and Schelling. And I confess, sir, I got con-

siderably tangled up among them all and went to Schopenhauer with my mind in a muddle. You have read him, sir?"

"Bits about the Will, merely," said Berkely; "my wife amused herself, one summer, teaching me German philosophy. *She* has read him."

"The Will is the central doctrine. You can understand, then, how he struck me. He dared to express all my half-confessed, unworked-out thoughts. Here was a world that was one universal battle-field, every species preying on some other; war, carnage, agony everywhere, everywhere an appalling waste; Nature stingy only of the means of sustaining life, prodigal alike of the powers of increase and destruction; always utterly indifferent to suffering! Then in man himself, the grand result, what do we see? The beast surviving and clutching his will, dragging him into sin he loathes; a creature with just enough appreciation of spiritual beauty to feel remorse for sins he has n't the strength to resist! And this being the universe, I was to imagine the God of the universe more merciful than his own laws! My reason recoiled, sir. But Schopenhauer makes all this paradox plain."

"How?" said Berkely.

"I am afraid I can't make myself as clear as I'd like, but this, in brief, is what I understand

Schopenhauer's theory to be. And I ought to say, in the first place, that he goes to work inductively; he flings aside the dialectic of the idealists and finds his facts first, then fits his theory to them. He goes with Kant so far as this, that he believes all this visible world to be, as far as we can know, simply 'a phenomenon of our own consciousness.' But something must produce this 'phenomenon,' therefore the world is 'not a mere shadow world,' but a reality, just as we are a reality and the force behind the world is the force behind us. That universal primary force is the will. The essential principle of man is not a soul (that is, a unit in which will and consciousness are indissolubly combined), but what Schopenhauer calls the 'radical of the soul,' the will; for, the consciousness is, as science teaches us, only the result of a nervous system, while the will exists independently, it is found where there is no nervous system, consequently no consciousness; therefore the will is the primary force in man. It is likewise the primary force in nature; it has made all the visible forms of life, or rather they are its representation, just as our bodily actions are the representation of our will. The will is the thing in itself which has made all things. But the will without consciousness is a blind force, it is simply the will *to be*, an in-

finite hunger for existence. This it is which has turned the polyp into beast and the beast into man. Now you can see, sir, that this will being the will to exist at all costs, each creature struggles for his own preservation careless of every other, or only careful as far as they have found out that hurting others will eventually hurt themselves. 'Nature, regardless of the individual, studies only to preserve the race.' Hence the endless conflict we see. There is no such thing as freedom of the will, as it is generally understood, because each man's temperament, that is his destiny, is determined for him before he is born. The universal will determines that for each individual, yet he as part of the universal will may be said to make his own fate. There is no such thing, either, as personal immortality. The individual depends for his consciousness on his nervous system, and when that decays he vanishes; his will is absorbed into the will of the whole. This blind will of the whole is the only God, and he, as Von Hartmann truly says, is to be pitied rather than revered. And as there is no God, so there are no absolute, innate ideas of right and wrong. Morality is simply a safeguard of existence, a deduction of experience, men having learned that some pleasures cost more than they are worth, and that hurting others in the end

hurts themselves. Happiness is an illusion like the rest, for what is it but the cessation of the pain of desire? and the will itself is an insatiable desire, and the instant we cease to desire we cease to exist. Love is as much of an illusion as happiness; there is no future and no hope save in ceasing to will, which is annihilation. 'This is the worst possible world, and we are the worst possible beings!' "

"Cheerful, all that," said Berkely, "but go on!"

"Of course that is n't the whole of it. There are some beautiful things said about art and abstract conceptions and a man of genius lifting himself transiently out of the struggle and forgetting himself in the beautiful; but the summing up of it all is that life is an inevitable failure, art itself is an illusion, and 'history relates,' says Schopenhauer, 'only the long, heavy, confused dream of humanity.' Now, sir, I can't give you any idea of the fascinating way in which Schopenhauer states this theory, I can only say that he seems to me to explain by it all the varied phenomena of existence. Can you see how such a philosophy captured me against my will? I did n't want to believe it; but a thing is true or not true, and the truth of Schopenhauer's doctrines did n't depend on my finding them unpleasant or the reverse. Against every

wish and every worldly prospect I *had* to believe him, sir!"

"But your wife," said Ethel.

"My wife was an angel, if such things could be," answered the hermit with a softer inflection in his tone. "She prayed for me continually, but when she saw how it was with me she said, 'Herman, you must give up the ministry; the blind cannot lead the blind!' So then I went to Wesley and told him the whole story. He was dreadfully shocked, but he stuck to me like a brother—enough better than any brother *I* ever had! 'Yes, you must leave the ministry,' said he, 'but don't give up the fight, brother; God won't suffer you to remain always in darkness.' Well, I left the ministry, resigned, and preached a farewell sermon giving my reasons. It made a great stir in the place for a while; I know now it broke Emily's heart. A crowd of people called on me. I was talked most to death in the two weeks following. Some of them congratulated me on my 'manly, straightforward course,' as they called it; and the Unitarian minister shook hands with me on the street and told me 'truth had set me free.' 'What is truth?' says I; 'have *you* found it? I only know that everything I've given my life to is a lie. I'm a miserable man! How shall I support my family?' He

said there were other openings for an honest man. Well, I didn't find them. You see I belonged to nobody. If I'd turned Unitarian or Catholic they would have looked after me a little, but there I was, a credit to no denomination's logic, clean outside of everything! Well, I'll not make a long story of it. At first everybody said Emily was n't to blame, and the ladies showed their Christian charity by asking her to lunch parties, which were convenient because then they need n't ask *me*.

“But Emily was shy and would n't go, though I've often urged her just so she might get a hearty meal; for it had come to that with us, ma'am. My congregation had run behind with my salary, and they said the scandal of my leaving so broke up the church that they could n't pay me. Butchers and grocers declined to lose more money by us. Wesley got me a little work on a paper, and I went about the small towns where I could, lecturing for ten dollars and my traveling expenses. But with it all we were often hungry, and should have been oftener if Wesley had n't been always sending things and getting us over there under one pretext or another for a better dinner than he'd give himself. But I said I would n't make a long story of it. My little Herman wore out his shoes, I'd no money for

more; it was wet weather, and he took cold. It turned into diphtheria; he died one week, and his mother the next of the same disease. Mitchel's sister came over and took care of her; we were so miserably poor then I caught her bringing flour over in a bucket. When Emily was taken first, a little town near wanted me for a lecture; she told me to go. I had n't a dollar in the world, sir, had to borrow my fare of Wesley, so — I went. When I came back she was dead."

He dropped his head on his folded arms. Neither of the listeners found anything to say.

Witte rose and walked to the easel. He flung one arm about the picture frame, and sometimes while he was speaking his fingers would gently stroke the glass. "Mitchel had this done from a photograph," he said. "Mitchel got me this place, too; he'd been trying for it some time. Getting it a little earlier would have made a difference. My wife's relations took my little girl; they offered to adopt her if I'd give her up entirely. My unfortunate religious views made the condition necessary, they said. It was the best thing for the child, so I gave her up. Once I went to see her. I saved up money enough to get to New York state where they lived. I bought some little things I thought would please her and

went straight to her aunt's house; I said to myself all the way that they surely would n't have the cruelty to hinder me from kissing her and talking to her a little while."

"Well, had they?" said Berkely.

"Oh, I guess not; they'd no need, for they weren't there; they'd gone to Europe to stay four years. I came back here. Some time I think I'll end it all with a pistol bullet, but where's the use? The will is indestructible, in another form I should still live and suffer. They are gone," he said with his hand on the picture frame; "I can never find them, and for what else should I go? There is but one way to peace, to cease to desire, and then I shall cease to exist."

He resumed his seat by the table, and leaning his head on his hand turned toward Ethel his hopeless, misty blue eyes. A sudden impulse made her stretch out her hand, saying, "I am so sorry for you!" He took the hand awkwardly, and at the same moment, unperceived by any of them, the man whom he had called Mitchel came across the grass plot before the house and stood in the doorway.

"Thank you," said Witte, "but tell me, can I do better? You, sir, too, can I do better? What better is there to do?"

"I think you *can* do better," said Berkely.

“Don’t you see one thing? Granting this is a bad world, still, *we have improved!* Nature has somehow made a man, and he is better than an ape. And don’t you see if there is any progress there is hope, and a world with hope in it can’t be the worst possible world, for a world without hope would be worse still! And if there is such a thing as progress, doesn’t every man help himself in helping the rest? I’m taking your own premises, only talking Von Hartmann instead of his master. One thing is sure, Mr. Witte, the only pleasures which don’t leave a sting behind them are those which come from obeying what is conventionally called our higher nature; and no man has ever listened to that unexplainable something in him which decides for righteousness and been sorry, no matter what the decision has cost him! I take it there’s something significant in that fact. Mr. Witte, you and I are only two out of a multitude, and every other one’s happiness is as dear to him as ours to us; now, it is another significant fact that the men who have, as you may say, flung their own happiness into the pool with the other fellows have been happier than those who have — well, played a lone hand, caring for no one else.” (“I’m getting my morals awfully mixed with betting and euchre,” thought Berkely; “I

shall have to cut it short.”) “Say you were to try the first of these plans, and since your own happiness is ruined give the best that’s in you to the poor beggars almost as badly off as yourself; don’t you think your will would then stand a better chance than it does here, alone with yourself and your bitter memories, to get into harmony with the universal Will? That’s the view I take of it as a pagan.”

“And what do you say?” said the hermit, turning abruptly to Ethel. Her husband looked at her also. She blushed a little, and being exceedingly shy her voice was not quite steady when she began to speak.

“I don’t look at it as a pagan,” she said, “for I am a Christian” (the man in the doorway took off his hat); “and I am a Christian for the same reason that you are a pessimist — because Christianity alone seems to me to offer a reasonable explanation of the contradictions and miseries of life. With another world this world seems reasonable, without one it is just a grim and cruel joke; and Schopenhauer sees that himself, for he tries to escape his own conclusions with the theories of art and his Buddhist ideas of absorption into the universal. Schopenhauer contradicts and dogmatizes worse than the Bible his followers despise, yet he cannot deny that there *may* be a will which is

in and for itself and conscious of itself—that is God; he only can see no sign of any such will in the universe. Between his dogmatism and that of the Bible it seems to me easy choosing, especially when you look at their practical results. I am quite willing to accept any proved conclusion of modern science, the origin of the species if you will, but what difference does it make *how* God has worked? You only remove the difficulty a step farther back; you don't solve it. Who created this matter which contains 'the promise and potency of life'? All that has been said of the only true happiness I firmly believe, only—has n't it been as well said in the Sermon on the Mount as by the modern Altruists?"

"Yes, ma'am, it has," said Mitchel, advancing.

"This is my friend I told you of," said Witte.

Berkely bowed in silence, but Ethel held out her hand. Probably Mitchel had not the slightest idea of any especial grace in the action; it is customary in the West to shake hands on an introduction. He shook hands with great cordiality, saying something Ethel could not hear, for just then the boat whistle blew.

"We must go," said Berkely hastily; "but think the whole thing over, and if you want

help to get away from here, this is my card. I should be glad — you understand. . Good-by.” He turned to Mitchel and said a few words in a low tone, while Ethel said to Witte, “You will think it over again, won’t you?” He did not answer, unless it was an answer to silently pick a pansy from the little bed of flowers near the door and give it to her. The boat whistle blew again and the bell began to ring.

“No, I’m not going,” called Mitchel. “Good-by.”

Berkely and his wife ran down the shore to the boat. “What did you say to Mr. Mitchel, John?” said Ethel as they gained the deck.

“Told him he was the best sermon for the Methodist Church I knew, and he said he only ‘done what any Christian man would do for another;’ then I gave him something for any charitable object he might have on hand, told him he was as good a Christian as Marcus Aurelius, and went off. But, Ethel, that fellow has taught me a lesson; I am afraid it is I who am the bigoted prig, not he.” Ethel gave him a look which made the woman whose cousin died in Kansas whisper to Mrs. Wattles: “Just married, poor things; they won’t look that way at each other long!”

“And I think,” said Berkely, with a little screw of his lips as though he brought the words

out hardly, — “I think the other poor beggar taught me one too. My cynicism is tolerably cheap, Ethel; I’m not proud of it. See, we are going.”

The hermit and Mitchel were standing on the shore, and both waved their hats as the boat moved off. Looking back, they saw the western sky aflame and the western water opal in the light, while under the darkening hills the lonely hut stood grim and silent, making no sign of life.

They sat on deck that night until the red faded from the sky, the hills grew into shapeless black masses, and they left Lake Pepin behind them. Nor have they ever returned.

The hermit did not write to Berkely, but Ethel thinks that she once had news of him. It was in the September of that same year when every newspaper was a death list because of the pestilence which wasted the South. Among the names of the dead at some obscure town in Mississippi — so blotted in the type that she could not read it rightly — was the name, “Herman Witte, volunteer nurse,” and beneath the brief comment, “Mr. Witte is the nurse who was taken sick the day after his arrival.”

She handed the paper to Berkely. He lifted his eyebrows, and being alone with his wife gave a low whistle.

“I believe it’s that Schopenhauer fellow, Ethel,” he said. “By Jove, if the unlucky beggar did n’t manage to make a failure of his death as well as his life!”

“MA’ BOWLIN’.”

WHEN the spring overflow comes, the plantation of Clover Bend becomes a rustic Venice. Boats glide over the cypress knees in the swamps, where the cypresses and sycamores look oddly short, and the thorn trees dip their red spikes in the water. Usually the store stands on a high bank, but then looking over the edge you can see the green waves curdling about the willow roots barely a step below.

Bud Quinn’s house faces the plantation, the store, the mill, and the score of houses ; but its western windows are toward the river and the sunset and the undulating line of cane which limits the hill country from whence the Quinns came. It is a house of the common Arkansas type — two ill-built chimneys on the outside, a beetling roof, and an open “gallery” in the middle.

One morning, during a certain overflow season a good many years ago, Mrs. Quinn sat in the gallery with her neighbor, Mrs. Brand, and the Quinns’ only child, Ma’ Bowlin’. The women of the “bottom-lands” are inclined to

be thin and sallow, while Mrs. Quinn's comely plumpness of person was accompanied by a particularly fair skin with roses and freckles. There were dimples in her cheeks deep enough to show when she was not smiling, and in spite of hard and sad years her blue eyes sparkled with a placid, kindly, half-humorous brightness. She had been sewing on a child's frock of flowered cotton, which she shook out, finally, saying: "Thar, now, Ma' Bowlin'; thar's yo' new gownd. Mus' be keerful; not mud it; not muss it — mus' be keerful."

The child listened with a strained attention, though the words were so simple. She was a fair, pretty child, with curling flaxen hair and dark blue eyes, in shape and color the copy of her mother's, but quite lacking their expression, having in its place a look at once wistful and dazed.

Mrs. Quinn repeated the words until the earnest little face brightened, and the curly head was nodded vehemently. "Ma' Bowlin' know. Ma' Bowlin' keerful. Putt on!" cried the child.

"Stan' still, then."

Ma' Bowlin' assumed a rigid military attitude, like a soldier at drill, while her mother slipped the frock over her shoulders.

"Do look at the little trick!" said Mrs. Brand.

“I l’arned ’er thet ar,” said Mrs. Quinn. “She’ll stan’ twell I tell ’er ter quit, ef she stan’s all day. She are the *best* chile ter mind. W’y, I tole ’er onst ter be shore keep up the fire w’ile I wuz ter the mill, an’ ef ye please she piled on cotton seed twell she nigh sot the heouse afire — she did so; the mantil war a-scorchin’.”

“Wa’al, a good, mindin’ chile’s a comfort, even ef they don’t jes make the wiggle,” said Mrs. Brand.

Mrs. Brand was a widow from Georgia, a tall, spare, black-haired, bright-eyed woman, in a very clean and stiff print gown; much respected by her neighbors because she openly despised the State of Arkansas, and her husband had owned slaves before the war. To be sure, the slaves were only a decrepit old pair thrown in as “boot” to a horse trade; but Mrs. Brand always spoke of them in a large plural as “We all’s niggers,” and felt about their vanished ownership much as a ruined noble might feel about his patent of nobility.

“Law me!” she continued, with a sigh, feeling for her snuff-stick, “ain’t the ways er Providence onscrutable? But I reckon ye set jes much store on ’er, ef not a little mucher.”

Mrs. Quinn’s arms, which were about the child, tightened into an almost savage clasp.

She crushed the fair curls against her cheek ; but directly she laughed. " I reckon," said she. " Thar now, honey, ye look right peart. Ye kin — yes, ye kin run long ter the store an' strike up with yo' paw an' show him yo' new dress. Be shore ye don' mud it, an' ye show it ter him. Yere's yo' bunnit."

Both women looked after the pretty little shape as it skipped along the narrow ridge of land leading to the plantation store. The widow compressed her lips over some unuttered thought.

Mrs. Quinn answered it: " Bud'll fotch 'er 'ome on his hoss. He don' much 'er like some ; but he means kin'. He never guvs 'er a ha'sh word — never."

" Some folks say he never gives her any word 't all," said the widow, dryly. " But law ! some folks wud bust if they cud n't talk ; it swells in 'em so, like pop-corn. Say, how ole is Ma' Bowlin' ; risin' er eight ? "

" Eight this day. Ye had orter remember the day."

" So I had," rejoined Mrs. Brand, with some emotion. " Law me ! yo' man nigh busted my do' down ; an' I was so phased I said right out : ' Bud Quinn, ain't ye ben lynched yet ? ' ' Yes, I have,' says he, ' n' Sukey begged me off. An' now she's took bad, an' for the Lord's sake

come an’ hope ’er!’ Wa’al, I had n’t much acquaintanceship with you all, but I knowed what the matter was, an’ I cudn’t refuse. So, if ye please, off we went — on that same wil’ colt *you* taken. An’ the way that there critter went r’arin’ an’ chargin’ through the water — ye ’member how high the overflow was that year — my word! I says, ‘Mr. Quinn,’ says I, ‘if I kin have my ruthers, I’d ruther walk.’ ‘Sukey done rode ’im,’ says he; ‘he won’ make no blunders.’ ‘Then I ain’t s’prised she’s took,’ says I. Say, Sukey, war n’t ye skeered? Night’n’ all.”

“I don’ ’member like I war,” said Sukey, rising and beginning to lay the table in the kitchen; “onyhow he war all the hoss left, so I had ter tek ’im.”

The widow gave a moment to remembrance and her snuff-stick before saying, “Sorter quar they all never f’und nuthin er Zed Ruffner ’cept that ole hat er his’n all bloodied an’ tromped on.”

“Bud ’lowed ’t warn’t Zed’s hat ’t all,” said Sukey, quickly; “jes er old un the hoegs fit over an’ tromped up. Ye knaw how them wil’ hoegs fight. Zed Ruffner tole Bud he war gwine ter light a shuck, kase he cudn’t put up no longer with his maw’s cavin’. He ’lowed ter go on the trade boat.”

“Yes, I ’member,” said the widow, “an’ I don’ know w’y Bud’s story war n’t likely as t’ other, an’ Zed done make tracks with the hundred an’ twenty dollars. I expect he ’lowed ’t was his own money, bein’ like ’t was from sellin’ the hoss his own mother left ’im; an’ my son Frank says Zed taken it turrible hard for to have *his* money used that a-way. But ayfter they all f’und the hat, an’ knowed how Bud done, ridin’ off in the bottom with Zed, an’ comin’ back by his lone, they was jes like a pack er dogs ayfter a wil’ hog — no reasonin’ in ’em, nuthin’ cept bark.”

“Oh, wa’al,” said Mrs. Quinn, mildly, “I don’t guess ’t wuz so quar, ayfter all. We-uns had n’t ben in Clover Bend mo’n two months; an’ bein’ frum the hill country, too, folkses war sorter sot agin us, natchelly nuff. An’ the wust trick er all war we-uns hevin hed hard words with the Ruffners. ’T war all ’long thet ar same colt witch Mis’ Ruffner she offered ter Bud, an’ Bud he taken up with it; but somebody offered more, an’ she sole the colt ter them, an’ w’en Bud guv ’er his opinion, she war r’arin’ an’ chargin’ — wa’al I don’ want fur ter say nuthin agin onybody cole in their grave” —

“She wuz a veneral ole liar, cole or hot,” interrupted the widow, calmly; “an’ hot nuff she had orter be, ef all tales air true. Ye knaw

she jes sicked them men on Bud. An' I reckon ye wud n't got 'im off ef *she'd* 'a ben reoun'. No, ma'am. How did ye, onyhow? I've wanted ter knaw fur a right smart, but I did n't like fur ter quiz ye."

"I'll tell ye, then," said Mrs. Quinn. "I wuz comin' home, w'en I met up with Tennessee Gale, an' she tole me how they 'd toted Bud off ter the big bayou whar they f'und the hat, ye knaw, fur ter lynch him. So 't war powerful dark, but I follered ayfter fas' I cud, an' I come up on 'em w'en they 'd got the rope reoun' Bud's neck. 'T wuz Ruffner tole 'em ter lemme talk. I knawed 'im spite er his black kaliker mask. So then I tole 'em how Bud come home that ar night 'thout a scratch er a t'ar on 'im. I axed they all ter s'arch 'im right thar, an' they done it, an' 't war jes like I tole 'em. Then I put it ter they all, cud a gre't big feller like Zed Ruffner be killed up 'thout mekin' a fight fur 't? 'Sides, the place war all tore up; thar war a turrible fight thar, shore, hoegs or humans. An' how wud they all feel ef ayfter they hunged Bud they 'd fin' Zed Ruffner safe an' soun'? I don't 'member on the words, but I begged hard, an' bymeby Ruffner he stomps his foot an' he says, sezee: 'Dad burn me! I cay n't stan' no mo', guilty or not guilty. Mis' Quinn, go 'long 'home; ye ain't fit ter be out yere. Boys, le's

let 'er tek 'er man 'ome with 'er. We kin fin' 'im easy nuff ef we want 'im.' An' that war how it happened. Bud he 'lowed Zed wud turn up, or leastways he write his paw. But it's eight years now, an' nary word nur sign. We-uns hez stopped on yere, an' Bud he gits good pay 's stockman, and Mr. Francis he won' yere a word agin 'im; but thet ar ole story don' never let us 'lone. Folkses don' knaw fur shore he done hit, but they don' knaw fur shore he did n't done hit, an' they all don' want fur ter hev no truck with us. The wust er 't are, Bud he cayn't git reconciled no way, an' he studies an' studies twell he are plum changed; he ain't the same man like — Law me! ef thar ain't Bud over yander, an' 'thout Ma' Bowlin'!"

"So 'tis," said the widow, rising, "an' time fur me ter be gwine, too."

"Ye come fur a fire?" said Mrs. Quinn, in hospitable sarcasm; "w'y won't ye stop fur dinner? Res' yo bunnit on the bed and dror up — *do!*"

But the widow was not to be detained. It almost seemed as though she were hurrying away from her host, who had alighted, and was now in his own doorway. He brushed past her with a surly "Howdy?" and flung himself into a seat before the table, where Mrs. Quinn presently served him, smiling as cheerfully as

though she expected a smile in return, which is hardly likely, did she pay any attention to experience.

"Ye did n't meet up with Ma' Bowlin' no-whar?" said she. "She war purportin' ter show ye her new gownd. She looked so purty in it, an' raily, Bud, Ma' Bowlin' hev l'arned" —

"I wisht ye'd quit yo' everlastin' gabbin' 'beout Ma' Bowlin'," the man broke in, savagely. "Naw, I did n't meet up with 'er, nur I did n't wanter. I've had nuff er Ma' Bowlin' a'ready this mornin'. Thet thar blamed fool Tom Lardy darst ter tell me she war a jedgment on me fur killin' Zed Ruffner, an' thar war half a dozen t' other men reoun ter back 'im up. Jes down yander en the stone 't war. I don' guess I wanter hear ony mo' er Ma' Bowlin'."

He scowled at his food the picture of morose dejection; yet only eight years ago Bud Quinn had been the model young man of the hill country, whom fathers were accustomed to hold up to their sons, and whose mop of red-brown curls, sparkling eyes, and splendid muscles were not more admired by the hill girls than his jovial good-humor.

Sukey Quinn was used to "Bud's ways," but even to her Bud seemed more wretched, and by

consequence more sullen, than usual. She sat pondering, her pleasant countenance a little saddened, until at last she said, rather timidly : "Bud, I ben studyin'. I don' see no reason further b'lieve that ar Zed'll turn up. Le's quit Clover Bend an' go back ter the hills, an' mek a fresh start whar folkses don' knaw."

"An' them all be mekin' their brags on me? Ye talk like a fool!"

Sukey didn't wince; the phrase was only one of those "ways" to which she was accustomed. Discussions between the pair were apt to end in that final retort by Bud, "Ye talk like a fool!" Not that Bud really thought that she did talk foolishly; on the contrary, he had a great pride in her sense: it was simply that he was at the end of his arguments, but not of his combativeness. Sukey would listen with unfeigned good temper, understanding perfectly that he gave vent to his sorrows and angers for the sake of being consoled and contradicted at once, and bearing no more malice for her snubbings than she would have borne her baby had it kicked her in a fit of colic; for Sukey was a maternal soul, who treated her husband all the more gently because his undeserved ignominy had soured his temper. "Law me! men folkses they cayn't hol' in," she said to her sole confidant, the widow from Georgia;

“an’ I are the onlies’ critter Bud kin sass, kase they all’s so sot agin ’im ’t wun’t tek mo’n a word ter fetch a shoot.”

But this admirable impersonal way of viewing things failed when it came to Ma’ Bowlin’; and Sukey, so tolerant, so equable everywhere else, could not endure a slighting word there.

Bud knew this as well as anybody, and a kind of instinct had kept him silent about his aversion to his child. At least he was never openly unkind to her. But to-day he was aching with impotent anger and humiliation and an intolerable sense of wrong. “An’ ’t war all longer *her*,” he thought, meaning poor Ma’ Bowlin’. “I ’clare I *hate* ’er!”

He jumped out of his chair and began walking the floor, talking furiously. “Hit’s no good; they all air down on me. I cayn’t mek a raffle. An’, good Lord! whut did I done? I never hurted a human critter in my life, nur wanted ter. Yit look how they run me down like a wil’ hoeg! Looks like ter me thar war a gre’t black devil, too big fur me, a-harntin’ me, an’ mekin’ everything go bad fur me. An’ I knaw *who*, too. I tell ye, Sukey, ’t are that thar ole gypsy critter I would n’t let camp in we all’s yard: she done it. Don’ ye ’member how she cussed me turrible hard? An’ I seen a black cat nex’ day, an’ that ar night ’t hapened. Oh. dad burn her!”

He swung his arm out in a gesture of uncontrollable irritation. The wall was nearer than he realized, and his fist struck the logs smartly. Bud laughed.

“Bud, I are sorry fur ye,” said his wife, very gently.

There was a pity and tenderness in her voice that soothed Bud in spite of himself, but he was in a mood to resent comfort. He raved on: “Oh! I’m done now; I won’ stan’ no mo’ er they all’s fool tricks. I tek my gun ter the store tēr-morrer. Let ’em sass me *then!*”

Sukey was too wise to argue further, since Bud was quite capable of carrying out his threat. She wondered whether he had finished his dinner, but was afraid to inquire, so she began to remove the superfluous dishes — very softly.

Bud remained glowering at the fire until he was disturbed by her passing to put a plate on the hearth. “Whut ye doin’ with them taters?” growled he.

“Wa’al, ye knaw, Ma’ Bowlin’ — she ain’t back yet.”

“An’ good luck fur we all if she never comes back.”

The cruel answer made the poor woman turn pale and tremble; she was so hurt that the tears would not come. Not lifting his sullen eyes,

Bud went on: “Ye much thet ar critter a heap; be ye so shore she are *your’n*? Hain’t ye never read en the Bible ’beout them thar folkses was persessed er the devil? You know that boy — Sukey, I swar w’en I see the critter grin-grin-nin’ ayfter me, I swar looks like ter me thet ar same devil wants me ’s got inter *her*! Thar, hit ’s spoke now; I cud n’t never bide thet ar chile — and now ye know w’y.”

He would not look at his wife, though he could hear her sob as he strode out of the house.

It might have been two hours before he came back to find the rooms empty, and to see Sukey running swiftly across the soaked cotton fields, her sun-bonnet on her back, her hair blown about a scared white face, and her skirts muddy up to her waist.

“Bud,” she screamed, “git the hosses! Quick! Ma’ Bowlin’s en the swamp!”

“My! my! my! Sukey!” exclaimed Bud, peevishly, “whut ye mean traipsin’ ’beout the kentry so ondecient? Look at yo’ skeert!”

Sukey had reached the porch by this time. She could hardly catch her breath, but she panted out: “Git the hosses! She went ter the store an’ axed fur ye like I tole ’er, an’ they all tole ’er ye war gone ter Tobe Morrow’s, an’ they ’low she sot out fur ter go ter Tobe’s, an’ some way missed the turn. I ben ter Tobe’s,

an' she ain't ben thar. Bud, I tole 'er ter meet up with ye, an' she 's off en the swamp s'archin' an' seekin' ye, an' she'll go twell she drops! O my Lord!" She was so agitated that Bud stared at her aghast, for a quieter, more easy-going woman than Sukey Quinn never lived in Arkansas. Sukey wringing her hands, Sukey taking on, was a spectacle too bizarre for Bud to realize. Why, never but once — and then suddenly that once returned so vividly that Bud seemed to watch the torch flames slant in the wind, and felt that wicked jerk of the rope against his throat.

"Don' ye tek on, Sukey," said he, gently; "we'll find 'er."

The father and mother rode together until they came to the crossing of the two roads, where Mrs. Quinn, who had n't spoken again, drew rein to say: "Mabbe she mought er gone by the river road. The Brown boys they wuz down yander with their bateau; she mought er gone with *them*. Ye better go down ter the big bayou."

"Whar — whar Zed — thar?" gasped Bud, flinching at a hideous fancy which flitted over the surface of his mind, as a vulture might brush a black wing past an eye. Was the devil haunting him going to finish the job by tolling his child out to mire and freeze and die just

where they all believed he had killed Zed Ruffner? Then who would n't allow he was guilty?

"I'll go," said he.

Off he galloped, splashing through the muddy water. The road to the "big bayou" was mostly under water. North and south, east and west, the eye met the same horizontal lines, now dark, now gleaming, dappled with flickering prints of leafage, etched with shadows of trunks and limbs, and here and there lost in a soft fur-like growth of young cane. Uncanny shapes of roots and logs and cypress knees showed duskily under the lustrous green water, blending with the masses of shade which huge live-oaks and cypresses flung on the surface, until it was hard telling which was the reality of form and which the semblance. An opalescent mist rose from the open spaces toward the west, through which blazed a sea of gold. The forest was in blossom. Sumptuous petals of wild-plum flowers or dog-wood drifted among the trees. Aloft was a twitter of birds and bird happiness, drowned for a second by the splash of hurrying hoofs, but instantly reasserting itself and rippling keenly and blithely through the wood.

Peril hid underfoot, and beauty was plain above; but the horseman rushing by was not conscious of either. There was an extraor-

dinary and terrible commotion in Bud Quinn's mind; using his own phrase, he was "powerful riled up"; and whether what he felt was grief, or dread, or a ghastly relief, he could n't tell for his life. Too simple for analysis, his emotions took the image of pictures — his wife in the swamp, the old crone cursing him, his neighbors frowning, and the children running to get out of his way. Then he was fooling with those sweet-potatoes that he sent around one winter because nobody else had any left. His throat tightened and his cheeks burned, just as they did when every bag and basket came back. What a heap of those fool things he did, anyhow, and how bad he felt about them! Visions of Ma' Bowlin' came incessantly. She was a baby; a girl, when he wanted a boy; she was a toddling little thing who would n't learn to talk, but used queer sounds of her own for a language; he had a notion that it was this which first gave him his repugnance to the child. She was a girl whose feeble mind was a judgment; then he slowly grew to hate her. He did n't know whether he hated her now or not; he only knew that if Sukey wanted her so bad, she must have her. Presently another feeling stole into the medley of his thoughts. As the air grew chill with nightfall he began to consider the child. "Say, ye devil," called Bud, who

was as brave as he was superstitious, and made no ado of defying the devil by name — "say, it's a mean trick er your'n tollin' thet ar little critter off inter the swamp!" He took sides with Ma' Bowlin'. "Dad burn ye, devil, I'll find 'er an' fotch 'er home spiter ye!" cried he. Then he would shout, "Ma' Bowlin' — hit 's paw! I'm a-comin', baby; don' ye be skeered." But only the echo of his own voice returned to him. He reached the big bayou. It was a moment before he could collect himself enough to look about, and his heart jumped when he saw a floating log. The relief which he felt surprised him. "A body 'd 'low I set store by the little trick," he said, huskily; "but I'm glad ye did n't do it yere, anyhow, devil!"

His horse was worn out; the stars were shining; there was nothing for it but to go home.

As soon as he reached the brow of the little hill which dips into the swamp beyond the mill, he could see lights dancing through the fields and hear shouts.

A horseman galloped toward him holding up a torch. Mr. Francis it was, the resident owner of the plantation.

"Come to the store, Bud," he called; "we're all out."

Indeed, Mrs. Quinn had aroused the plantation, and the men had been scouring the country

all the afternoon. One band had just come in, and were sitting on horseback before the platform of the store. Their leader sat sideways on his saddle in an attitude of languid indifference, yet he had ridden harder than any one. He was a slightly built man, whose thin face looked the thinner for a peaked black beard and long straight silky black hair falling over his flannel collar. His features were regular, and his dark eyes had a very pleasant, mild expression.

“Reckon ye ’ain’t f’und no trail?” he said, listlessly, not looking at Bud, to whom the other men also paid no attention.

“Naw, Mr. Ruffner,” answered Bud.

“Mos’ like she strayed off en the swamp. We all bes’ look up them hoeuses off in the cane-brake. Thar’s coffee b’ilin’ en the store, an’ Mis’ Quinn are thar.”

Bud dismounted and entered the store. A portion of the long room had been railed off for an “office.” The store is the centre of everything on a plantation. The office was full of women, and a cloud of vapor came from a boiler of coffee on the stove. The widow from Georgia was ladling coffee, and Mrs. Quinn holding the cups.

Just then a little commotion outside caused all the other women to run out, giving Bud an

opportunity to approach his wife. Her face was so strange and rigid that he was frightened, and her eyes traveled over his mud-splashed figure in hopeless, stern inquiry.

“Ye need n’t tell me,” said she, “ye did n’t fin’ nuthin’. I reckon yo’ glad. Ye hated ’er; ye wanted ’er outen yo’ road, an’ ye got yo’ wantin’. But don’ come nigh *me*; fur ef my baby’s los’, I’ll never live longer ye no mo’, Bud Quinn — never!”

“Oh, hush!” said the widow from Georgia, good-humoredly; “thet ain’t no talk fur ’tween man an’ wife! Ain’t the chile his’n well’s your’n? G’way, Bud; she don’ knaw rightly whut she’s sayin’.”

With that she pushed Bud — dumb as a bird caught up in a whirlwind — out into the main room of the store.

“W’y are Sukey gone back on me?” were the first words he could stammer.

“I reckon she’s wored out,” answered the widow, grimly. “Look-a-here, Bud Quinn; I sorter taken yo’ side jes now, but ’tain’t kase I got ony gre’t opinion of ye, for I ’ain’t” —

“Yo’ like they all; ye ’low” —

“I don’ ’low ye hurted Zed Ruffner, if ye mean that. No, sir; I got a low down ’pinion of ye jes kase ye treat yo’ wife so mean — an’ thet thar po’ little trick she’s so petted on, po’

little innercent, smilin', mindin' critter, always cravin' fur to please ye! *She* ain't to blame fur not havin' good sense; I reckon she'd take sense if she cud! But ye had a grudge agin 'er kase she was throwed up at ye fur a jedgment. An' I kin tell ye, Bud Quinn, ye made folks dead sho' she *was* a jedgment jes by the way ye treated 'er! Ye've grieved Sukey all that chile's life treatin' 'er so. Not a kin' word nur look fur her; an' ye ben so busy studyin' on yo' troubles an' hatin' t' other folks fur misjedgin' ye, that ye never taken no thought er her'n! Laws! Bud Quinn, d' ye expect *she* liked bein' looked down on? Or liked fur to have Ma' Bowlin half cracked? Or liked fur to have *you* glumin' roun' nur never muchin' yo' own chile? I reckon Sukey's human, an' ye've got ter the eend er 'er long-sufferin' —

“Wa'al, Mis' Brand,” Bud interrupted doggedly, “whutsumever I done, jawin' me won't fin' Ma' Bowlin'. I got ter git my tother hoss an' go. Ye tell Sukey I'll find Ma' Bowlin' — *someways!*”

“Ye *better,*” retorted the unabashed widow, “an' the less truck ye try ter have with Sukey befo' then, the mo' she'll like ye.”

Bud walked away without another word. Mr. Francis gave him a torch, and he rode off on his fresh horse. Nobody else spoke to him or offered him any help.

This time he chose the high-road. For some distance it was above water; but, finally, he came to a depression in the ground which the overflow had turned into a shallow river, filled with leaves and sticks and floating logs, and all the débris of the swamp. By stepping from log to log it was just possible for a footman to cross to the firm land beyond.

"Ma' Bowlin' war powerful spry," thought Bud; "hopped like a 'coon." He had a feeling of admiration for the child's agility. "Mought be a show er findin' a trail ef 't war daylight," he muttered; "cayn't do much with a torch." But he held it high, and suddenly he uttered a loud exclamation. On the moss of one of the logs was a tiny footprint. In spite of the darkness he had found the trail. To pursue it was not so difficult: here a freshly broken twig where the little fingers had caught, there a patch of moss as though a foot had slipped, oak limbs swayed out of place, or logs wet by a fresh immersion beneath a passing weight, told the story of the journey plainly enough for a woodman like Bud.

But all at once the trail ceased. Let him ride in what direction he might, he could not find a sign. The print of fingers on the low branch of a pawpaw-tree showed that so far the little traveler must have come; but there

was the end. While Bud hesitated, a great log drifted slowly and majestically through the circle of light cast by his torch out into the forest darkness.

"Mought er skipped on a log like thet," Bud mused, "an' the log sailed off; but, God A'mighty, witch way?"

He rode aimlessly about the swamp, shouting until he was hoarse: "Ma' Bowlin'! Ma' Bowlin'! Paw's comin'! Don't be skeered, honey! Who-op! Whoo-op!"

He could hardly remember the time when he had used such a caressing word to the child; but now, somehow the image of the little "wanting," trustful thing hunting for him in the swamp affected him strangely. He remembered that there had been times when his heart had turned to the child and he had hardened it again. One scene in particular kept recurring to him. He had gone to a Fourth of July celebration, and the people were sitting in groups about the grass, eating their luncheon. Lum Shinault was leaning against a tree near Bud, and his little daughter, hardly two years old, toddled up to him, stretching out her arms and crying, "Up! up!" Lum snatched her up and marched along with her, laughing and singing. At this Ma' Bowlin', who was not quite six years old, but just beginning to talk, pulled

at Bud's trousers. "Up! up!" she stammered, in exactly the other child's tone. It made some of the children titter, and Bud was furious. He pushed the little thing away. He remembered how the smiling little face had fallen, and how she had run to hide it against her mother's arm. Sukey had lifted her up, heavy as she was. "Maw'll tote ye a piece, honey." Bud could hear the words, with the slight tremor in them, so distinctly that he started. "Lord, how cud I ben so mean?" he groaned. "Thet blamed critter war right. Poor Sukey! An she war allus seekin', quiet like, ter mek the little trick set store by me!"

The night wore on, chillier and darker every hour. And somehow, as Bud Quinn's hopes sank lower and lower, and his torch began to flare, and his horse to stumble with fatigue, his mind went back to his simple and tender thoughts in the time before Ma' Bowlin' was born, and the lost child was his own little baby again.

"Lord, but I hate ter leave ye, honey," he cried, "but Nig caynt skeercely walk. I'll come back quick's I kin."

The morning was dawning before he reached the store. There is always something dispiriting about the first gray dawn, and the forlornness of a cotton plantation when the mill has

black unsightly wooden walls, showing gaps, and the whitewash is peeling off the sides of the store, and a fog hangs over the drowned lands, was in this case increased by half a dozen muddy horses dropping their necks below the horns of their saddles by the store fence. All night the search had gone on with no result. Ruffner was just in, bringing no news except that every cabin within ten miles had been visited in vain. He told Bud that Sukey was out searching. Three or four men had come out on the platform. They put their hands in their pockets, and looked at Bud curiously as he almost tumbled off his horse. He staggered and fell, in fact, when he tried to walk. They did not take their hands out of their pockets, and he got up painfully and leaned against a post. Lum Shinault, coming to the door, saw him, and went back, to reappear directly with a steaming cup of coffee and a piece of corn bread.

“Ye hev ter eat ’em,” he said. “I don’ guess yo’ much better off ’n yo’ hoss. Say, got any other un ’cept the un Mis’ Quinn on?”

“Naw,” said Bud. “I’ll hev ter try a ba-teau.”

“Ye kin hev my gray if ye like,” said Lum.

Tears started to the broken man’s eyes.

“I tell ye thet ar feller feels *bad*,” Lum told

his wife, later. “Need n’t tell me he don’t. He went off like a shot the minnit he got his hoss; an’ he done ben out sence yistiddy ev’nin’.”

All day the search continued. Late in the afternoon, however, the worn-out searchers began to come into the store. Last of all, Bud Quinn rode up on Shinault’s horse. Mrs. Quinn was talking to Ruffner on the platform. Ruffner said, “Howdy? naw, we ain’t f’und ’er *yit*.” And another man led his own horse away to make room for Bud; but Bud heard and saw nothing. He only looked miserably at his wife, and she turned away.

Lum Shinault brought a horse to Bud, saying, kindly: “Yere’s yo’ Nig; he are rested by this, an’ I’ve fed ’im good. I knowed ye cud n’t res’ twell ye knowed sartin. But ye mus’ eat fust; an’ Mis’ Brand’s fotchin’ ye suthin’.”

“I are ’bleeged ter ye, Lum,” said Bud almost sobbing. He took what the widow had brought, while she looked on grimly. Then he said: “Mis’ Brand, I are goin’. Will ye kin’ly tell Sukey how she caynt want fur ter fin’ Ma’ Bowlin’ mo’n me, nur be mo’ wishtful ter be good ter ’er ayfterwuds?”

“All right,” said the widow; “now ye talk, Bud Quinn. Pity ye did n’t talk that a-way befo’; but better late nur never.”

Bud was off before she finished. She could see him slip about in the saddle; in truth, he felt dizzy and weak, and, what is worse, hopeless.

Hardly a rod beyond the mill he was joined by Ruffner, who remarked, carelessly, "Mought 's well travel 'long tergether, goin' same way."

"Ef ye wanter," said Bud. "I'm goin' in the bottom."

They rode along, Ruffner furtively watching Bud, until finally the elder man spoke with the directness of primitive natures and strong excitement:—

"Whut 's come ter ye, Bud Quinn? Ye seem all broke up 'beout this yere losin' yo' little trick; yit ye did n't useter set no gre't store by 'er — least, looked like" —

"I know," answered Bud, lifting his heavy eyes, too numb, himself, with weariness and misery to be surprised, — "I know; an' 't ar curi's ter me too. I *did n't* set no store by 'er w'en I had 'er. I taken a gredge agin 'er kase she had n't got no good sense, an' you all throwed it up ter me fur a jedgment. An' knawin' how I had n't done a thing ter hurt Zed, it looked like cl'ar agin right an' natur' fur the Lord ter pester me that a-way; so some-ways I taken the notion 't war the devil, an' thet he got inter Ma' Bowlin', an' I mos'

cud n’t b’ar the sight er that pore little critter. But the day she got lost kase er tryin’ ter meet up with me, I ’lowed mabbe *he* tolled ’er off, an’ I sorter felt bad fur ’er; an’ — an’ w’en I seen them little tracks er her’n, some ways all them mean feelin’s I got they jes broked off short insider me like a string mought snap. They done so. An’ I wanted thet chile bader’n I ever wanted anything.”

“Law me!” said Ruffner, quite puzzled. “But say, Bud, ef ye want ’er so bad’s all thet, ye war n’t wanten mad the Lord by lyin’, kase He are yo’ on’y show now. Bud Quinn, *did* ye hurt my boy?” He had pushed his face close to Bud’s, and his mild eyes were glowing like live coals.

“Naw, Mr. Ruffner,” answered Bud, quietly, “I never tetched a ha’r er ’is head!”

Ruffner kept up his eager and almost fierce scrutiny for a moment; then he drew a long gasping sigh, crying, “Blame my skin ef I don’ b’lieve ye! I’ve ’lowed, fur a right smart, we all used ye mighty rough.”

“’T ain’t no differ,” said Bud, dully. Nothing mattered now, the poor fellow thought; Ma’ Bowlin’ was dead, and Sukey hated him.

Ruffner whistled slowly and dolefully; that was his way of expressing sympathy; but the whistle died on his lips, for Bud smote his shoulder, then pointed toward the trees.

“Look a-thar!” whispered Bud, with a ghastly face and dilating eyeballs: “Oh, Lord A’mighty! thar’s her — an’ *him!*”

Ruffner saw a boat leisurely propelled by a long pole approaching from the river side; a black-haired young man in the bow with the pole, a fair-haired little girl in the stern. The little girl jumped up, and at the same instant a shower of water from light-flying heels blinded the young man.

“Paw! paw!” screamed the little girl; “maw tole Ma’ Bowlin’ — meet up — paw!”

Bud had her in his arms now; he was patting her shoulder, and stroking her hair with a trembling hand. Her face looked like an angel’s to him in its cloud of shining hair; her eyes sparkled, her cheeks were red, but there was something else which in the intense emotion of the moment Bud dimly perceived — the familiar dazed look was gone. How the blur came over that innocent soul, why it went, are alike mysteries. The struggle for life wherein, amid anguish and darkness, the poor baby intellect somehow went astray, and the struggle for life wherein it groped its way back to light, both are the secrets of the swamp, their witness; but however obscurely, none the less surely, the dormant soul had awakened and claimed its rights, and Ma’ Bowlin’ had ceased to be the baby, forever.

Meanwhile, if possible, the other actors in the scene were equally agitated. The old man choked, and the young man exclaimed, huskily, “Paw! ye ain’t dead, then?”

“Waal, I don’t guess I be,” said Ruffner, struggling after his old dry tone, though his voice shook; “did ye ’low I war?”

“I read it in a Walnut Ridge paper only a month ayfter I went: ‘The late Mr. William Ruffner er Clover Bend’ — an’ a right smart about ye” —

“Thet thar war yo’ Uncle Raker, boy. He war on a visit like, an’ died; an’ that ar blamed galoot in Walnut Ridge got ’im sorter mixed up with me, ye un’erstan’; but yo’ maw, she are gone, boy, shore, died up an’ burried.”

“I kin b’ar hit,” said Zed Ruffner; “but I *was* right riled up ’beout *you*, paw. ‘Lef’ all his property to his widder,’ says the paper; thet ar riled me too. Says I, ye wun’t see me very soon to Clover Bend — I was allers sorter ashy, ye know. Fur a fact, ye would n’t ’a seen me now ef ’t had n’t a-ben fur this yere little trick. I war on a trade boat near Newport, an’ some fellers I know taken me off fur a night ter thar camp. They was stavers. Hit’s ’way off in the swamp, twelve mile frum here; an’ I was up befo’ sun up, aimin’ ter start back fur the river, w’en I heard the fun-

niest sound, suthin' like a kid, 'Maw! maw!' Natchelly I listened, an' byme-by I follered ayfter it, an' whut shud I come on but a gre't big log, an' this here little critter settin' on 't, hol'in on by her two hands to a sorter limb growin' on the log, an' shore's ye live, with her gownd slung reoun' her neck in a bundle. Lord knows how fur thet ar log had come, or whut sorter travelin' it made, but thar warn't a speck or a spot on thet ar gownd. 'S all I cud do ter git 'er ter lemme pack it up in a bundle, kase she wud n't put 't on nohow; said the bateau was wet. So we warmed 'er an' fed 'er, an' I taken her 'er long seekin' fur her kin; an' — wa'al, that's w'y I 'm yere!"

Just as the big clock in the store struck the last stroke of six, Sukey Quinn, who had been cowering on the platform steps, lifted her head and put her hand to her ear. Then everybody heard it, the long peal of a horn. The widow from Georgia ran quickly up to Sukey and threw her arm about her shoulders. For a second the people held their breath. It had been arranged that whoever found the lost child should give the signal by blowing his horn, once if the searchers came too late, three times if the child should be alive. Would the horn blow again?

"It are Bud's horn!" sobbed Sukey. "He 'd never blow fur onst! Hark! Thar 't goes agin! Three times! An' me wud n't hev no truck with 'im; but he set store by Ma' Bowlin' all the time."

Horn after horn caught up the signal joyfully, and when the legitimate blowing was over, two enterprising boys exhausted themselves on a venerable horn which was so cracked that no one would take it. In an incredibly short time every soul within hearing distance, not to mention a herd of cattle and a large number of swine, had run to the store, and when at last the two horses' heads appeared above the hill, and the crowd could see a little pink sun-bonnet against Bud Quinn's brown jean, an immense clamor rolled out, the men tearing their throats with shouting, the women sobbing aloud, the children yelling their shrillest, cattle bellowing, and pigs squealing.

But there came a hush as Bud dismounted, and, carrying Ma' Bowlin', walked up to his wife, and silently put the child in her arms.

"Oh, Bud!" sobbed she, and before she looked at Ma' Bowlin' she clung to him and kissed him.

"It are all right, all right, Sukey," he kept repeating, while the tears ran down his tanned cheeks; "don' take on, honey."

“Laws!” sniffed the widow from Georgia, flapping some drops off her own face with the corner of her apron, “ef the critter ain’t in her petticoats!”

Then came Ma’ Bowlin’s proud moment. She had her bundle tight clasped in her little arms, and now she undid it, displaying the brilliant frock. “Maw tole Ma’ Bowlin’,” she cried, “nawnaw mud hit, nawnaw muss hit; Ma’ Bowlin’ new gownd!”

“An’ ef ’t had n’t a-ben fur the new gownd, sis,” said the widow, “I reckon ye ’d ’a never ben los’!”

“Nur fatched back Zed,” Ruffner interjected, amid a general bewilderment.

“The Lord bless the gownd, then,” said Bud Quinn; “an’ the baby too!”

“Amen!” said William Ruffner.

HALF A CURSE.

ON a certain April day, in the year 1862, the stage-coach was waiting at the plaza-corner of the oldest Floridian town. At that time the plaza was merely an unkempt common, where cows and pigs might ramble at will, taking their siestas in the ruined old market-house, or sunning themselves at the base of the stubbed pyramid erected by the last Spanish rulers. Where now the smart little shops elbow the grim old cathedral, then high coquina walls, over which waved orange and palmetto-trees, joined the ancient house-fronts, and hanging balconies cast a grateful shade on the sand below. Then as now the wharf and the sea-wall bounded the eastern side, and the water glittered behind a little flock of sails. If one stepped on the sea-wall he could see the hated Yankee flag flying over the old fort, and a blue-coated officer was watching the crowd about the coach. High above the hats and bonnets towered a gay turban, and a black cheek pressed tenderly against the white cheek of a child, while tears ran unrestrained down both faces

alike. The child sobbed aloud ; but the woman, not uttering a sound, only strained the small body closer, and looked through her tears at the young gentlewoman beside her. She was a beautiful creature — Johnny Tindall, the young Federal captain, thought — so slender, graceful, and high-bred looking, with such a touching sweetness of expression, and yet such a tropical fire in those brilliant, almond-shaped, dark eyes. He caught her last words : “ Yes, it is hard, *hard* ; but what should I do without you to take care of the place ? I know I shall find you here, whatever happens.”

“ Yes, Miss Nannie,” was the answer ; “ I keep de place good ’s I kin, an’ yo sholy fin’ me yere waitin’.”

“ All aboard !” shouted the driver.

The parting came, and was over ; Johnny had the impression that all three cried at once.

“ What is the matter ?” said he.

He spoke to his next neighbor ; but another man — a stout florid man in civilian’s dress, though wearing a military cap — replied ; “ Oh, jess some rebs leavin’ ruther’n swaller the oath.”

“ Such a trifle wouldn’t send you away, would it, Baldwin ?” said Johnny, glancing with undisguised contempt at the speaker, a sutler in his own regiment.

“Of course I’d take the oath, captain; I ain’t a Southerner.”

“I thought you came from South Carolina.”

I was only there for a while,” said Baldwin, sullenly; but directly, with a more cheerful air, he added: “Did ye notice them people? That there lady’s Mrs. Legree. Her pa was a Charleston big-bug, and she married Renny Legree. He’s off in the rebel army. They’ve a mighty fine place here. Say, did you ever see a mortal critter tall’s that there colored woman?”

“I want to see her,” said Johnny, walking off; but Venus was gone.

Afterward he learned something of her history. Venus Clinch was born a slave on the Clinch plantation in South Carolina. She claimed to have Indian blood in her veins, which is quite possible, since her father was one of the “negro allies” of the Seminoles, captured during the Florida wars. Venus was a famous cook; and on Miss Nannie Clinch’s marriage, she was one of the wedding-gifts. With her went Ambrose, her husband, a handsome, amiable, indolent, utterly worthless mulatto. It was supposed that Venus might want her husband’s company. She, however, was a most philosophical spouse. “Now, ole marse,” said she, kindly, “don’ ye poturb yoseff ’bout Am-

bro's'. I ain't no-ways 'tickler 'bout dat ar nigger. Ef you all kin git 'im trowed in wid de hosses, I says, fotch 'im 'long; but he ain't wuth no buyin' no ticket fo', dat 's sho!"

Nevertheless Ambrose came, and often enough Venus regretted her qualified assent.

"Mazin' how come I taken up wid dat trifin', ornery, yaller nigger," she would say. "Nebber done a stroke fo' me, nebber guv me nuffin' — 'cept de measles, an' dem I wan't seekin'. Dese yere yaller niggers dey's no nation; got de good er none, an' bad er all. Ambros' am bad down to he heel."

Venus never had but one child, and it died in infancy. After that her sore heart's entire and lavish devotion was given to Nannie Clinch. She was a faithful servant to all the Clinches, but she worshiped "Miss Nannie."

All these particulars gradually came to Johnny, who very soon made Venus's acquaintance.

The beginning was his noticing her as she walked daily on the beach before the barracks; indeed, no one could help noticing a figure built on such an enormous scale. Besides, there was a certain massive dignity, and even symmetry, about her form, and her features, Indian rather than negro, were brightened by a smile of true African good-humor. Her costume recalled the best days of the vanished *régime*. Her gay

turban and her white apron were always fresh from the iron; and on her head was poised a great basket filled with enticing tropical sweetmeats, the secrets of which Aunt Venus had guarded for years.

When neither vending her wares nor making them, she toiled in the Legare garden. Meanwhile, Ambrose led a life of elegant leisure as skipper of a sail-boat so leaky and unruly that only a suicide could care to hire it. A little labor would have made a tidy sloop out of this relic of the Legares, but Ambrose always said: "Dar 's udder t'ings en life dan toilin' fo' money!"

Johnny was Venus's best customer. Nothing pleased the faithful creature more than to talk of her mistress.

"I 'members," said she, "de ve'y fustis time I sot heyes on Miss Nannie, to know 'er. Ye muss know, sah, dat I wuz bawn on de plantation an' raised dar twel I 'se risin' er sixteen, w'en my mammy she done die up. She wuz a witch'ooman, my mammy wuz; an' one er witchin's, 'e done got twurn' roun', some'ow, an' hit kill' 'er dead. De obberseer, he 'lowed 't wuz kase 't wuz fallin' wedder, an' she cotch cold en de wet. But I knows 't wuz de *witchin'*! So, den, dey sen' me ter Chawlston, an' de cook she l'arn me ter cook, an' spat me

good wh'n she 's mad; an' onct she guv me a mos' outrigeous lick wid a stick er fat wood, an' runned a splenter enter my awm. So, den, I wuz pickin' at it outside, an' a grievin' fo' my mammy — dat nebber taken nuffin' wuss'n a shengle to me — an' a bellerin' ve'y sorf like, dat Aunt Phœbe don' heah my lammertations, an' give me mo' ter lammertate fo', w'en in runs my Miss Nannie. De angil looks er dat chile in 'er sweet li'le w'ite frock, an' de li'le black slippers, an' de big blue sash. An', ef ye please, she taken pity on me an' guv me a big chunk er cake, an' calls her paa ter cut out de splenter. She did so. He wuz a ve'y kin' man, ole marse; an' so wuz ole miss, too, dat's cole an' dead now, po' t'ing!"

It was curious what a sense of intimacy Johnny came to feel in this unseen rebel family. He knew all about "ole marse" and "ole miss," who had been an invalid ("ole marse kep' 'er a invaleed fo' twenty yeahs"), and Marse Tim, and Marse Bertie.

Johnny's cheeks were rosy, and he had a chubby little figure; but there was a streak of romance in his kind heart — why, indeed, should only the thin be romantic? — and it pleased him to be indirectly serving these absent enemies through Venus. She always received him in the garden. "I wud like mazin' ter ax ye

in, marse cap'n, but I knows Miss Nannie's 'pinyuns, an' I cayn't; but de kitchen, dat 'long ter me, an' you is right welcome dar, allus. I ain't none er yo' cooks dat 's skeered fo' hab folks see dar cookin'."

Johnny's eyes twinkled. North, his chubby form was hailed with delight by all the mothers of his acquaintance — for Johnny had great possessions. South, it appeared, he might be glad to visit the kitchen. He did visit the kitchen, and was content to view the mansion from the garden. Venus regarded the house with awe, and even to Johnny's eyes it looked imposing — a Southern house of the last generation, built in fond imitation of a South Carolina home, with its lofty Doric portico, and the galleries on the sides, which the Cherokee rose changed into bowers. But it was the garden which was Johnny's paradise. Here, orange-trees, magnolias, and myrtles kept an unchanging verdure through the season, palmettoes lined the wide avenue, and strangely cut leaves of the tropics — fig, pomegranate, date-palm — mingled with more familiar foliage; while everywhere the tree-limbs dripped with Spanish moss. A sumptuous color and glow dazzled the Northern eye; trumpet flowers swinging their flames against the walls, oleanders taller than pear-trees, the gold of jasmine and the

dead-white of orange-blossoms relieved against the weird haze of the dripping trees. Johnny used to be reminded of the Garden of Eden. He would tell himself that the poignant odors which filled the air had intoxicated him.

Certainly he thought more than was good for him of the beautiful mistress of the place.

So, during a few weeks he walked in the garden, and Venus toiled hopefully, and Ambrose was quite as hopeful though he did not toil at all. Then, one fine morning, Captain Tindall's regiment marched away.

He went in the autumn; and in the following summer he was sent back to the town on some military business. As soon as he could he went to see Venus. There was a dismal change in the place. The gate was gone, and the fence looked as though a regiment had charged down on it. Within, it was worse. The flower-beds were trampled out of shape, the scuppernong-vines draggled on the ground, as if torn down by impatient hands; and limbs had been wrenched off the orange-trees, or left hanging at forlorn right angles by strips of bark. The house, with its shattered windows, and the weeds growing over its broad steps, seemed mutely lamenting over the desolation. Yet a wisp of smoke crept out of the huge coquina chimney of the kitchen — token that Venus

must still be living there. But in vain Johnny hunted and shouted, and, at last, in despair he took his way back to the city gates. He passed along the narrow streets, vaguely depressed by what he had seen, until he was stopped by a crowd before the building which still bears the title of "The Governor's Palace."

In the day of Spain the palace doubtless cut a becoming and princely figure, with its tower and balconies and portico, and the famous garden, wherein was planted every kind of tree on earth (according to the old chronicler); to-day, shorn of all these, it is a commonplace post-office, but when Johnny saw it a shabby vestige of pomp remained in the crumbling ornamentation of the façade and the Spanish corridor of arches opposite that row of pride-of-India trees, not one of which remains. The building was used as a court-house by the United States Government during the war; and it was so used at this time. A crowd of men overflowed the corridor into the street.

The people were Minorcans for the most part, dark, thin, and dejected looking; but there was a sprinkling of black faces and blue coats, and a little bandying of jokes. Johnny asked a man what was going on. He was a Minorcan; he answered, sullenly: "Dey refuge 'low us pay tax, so den dey sell our lan', now."

“Listen,” called a soldier, nearer the door, “there’s a circus in there. An old colored woman’s bidding against Baldy. She goes him ten cents better every time, and he’s hoppin’ mad! Too bad! He’s got it.”

A burst of laughter rolled out of the court-room.

“What’s the joke?” called another soldier.

“Auntie wants Uncle Sam to lend her a few hundred to beat Baldy, and to take it out in jam!”

Johnny wedged himself through the men to where Venus stood, her gay turban towering above all the heads and her black profile cut against the yellow stucco pillar like a bas-relief of anguish.

She turned a piteous gaze down to Johnny’s kind eyes.

“You’s done come too late, marse cap’n,” she said; “dey taken Miss Nannie’s place ’way. I’s offer dem all de money fum de po’serves, but dey won’ hab it.”

Johnny got her out of the court-room into the plaza opposite, where he made her sit down.

“Now tell me what this all means,” said he.

“Dey done take hit, sah. Fust dey steal all de gyardin truck an’ de chickins, an’ dey ’tice ’way po’ ol’ Strawberry, de onlies’ cow we all hab leff” —

“Why did n’t you complain?”

“I done de bes’ I knowed, sah. I cotch one t’ief an’ I take my slipper to ’im de same like his own mudder; an’ den I tote ’im to de cunnel by de collar. Dey done punish ’im. But I cudn’t cotch no mo’; dey wuz too spry. Den dey putt de wah-tax on, an’ I done went prompt fo’ ter pay, wid de change e’zact; but de boss, he say Miss Nannie am a rebil, an’ de loil peoples dey’s de onlies’ people kin pay taxes; an’ he refuge” —

“But he had n’t any right to refuse!”

“Dunno. Dat am w’at he done. Dey done Mr. Dee Medeecis de same way; dey twurn ’im hout on de pa’metto scrub kase he hab two sons wid de ’federates, an’ den dey sole ’im up. Dat t’ief, Bal’win, he git de ’ous. ’Spec’ he git de town, d’rectly. Well.”

Her head sank hopelessly on her breast; but in a moment she looked up; she even made an effort at the conversation which her notions of politeness demanded. “You’s lookin’ right peart, sah. I hopes you is gittin’ on smart. I ’se made some dem fig po’serbs an’ guavas fo’ ye, sah, an’ ef ye cayn’t tote ’em wid ye, whar will I sen’ dem kase I won’ hab no mo’ — place.”

A kind of dry sob shook her frame, though it brought no tears. Her woeful patience af-

fecting Johnny so that the good fellow could n't sleep that night. He did what he could — protested against the sale as illegal, and even offered Baldwin twice his purchase-money for the title-deeds.

“Ye cayn't buy it of me,” said Baldwin, grinning in a very irritating fashion. Thanks to Johnny, he was no longer in the army, and he let his old captain understand that he remembered.

“I'm hanged but I'll get the house in spite of you, you scoundrelly cad,” vowed Johnny at last. At which Baldwin only grinned again.

For the present, however, nothing could be done. Johnny helped Venus move Mrs. Legare's property into the house of a Minorcan, the same De' Medici whose wrongs had been recited by Venus. Venus herself worked like a horse, and never spoke a superfluous word. She showed a curious patience over all the delays and annoyances of such a flitting; even Ambrose did not get a hard word. He lent his amiable countenance to the occasion, advising, directing, criticising, everything but working; and the next morning he presented himself to Johnny very smartly dressed, with a traveling bag in his hand, like one ready for a journey.

“I'se called, sah,” said Ambrose, in his softest voice, “ter 'trust ye, sah, wid my ados ter

Venus. I 'se gwine 'way, sah, wid Cap'n Grace. Venus, she sut'nly ar comical, an' I wisht, sah, you hab de kin'ness ter look ayfter 'er dis yere mawnin'; she up yonder ter de place, an' I 'se unner de impression, sah, she aimin' fo' ter chop Mr. Bal'win's head open wid de ax! Yes'ah. No, sah" — as Johnny made an impulsive movement — "dar ain't no call fo' aggitatin' yo' seff; wait twell I comes ter de squeal 'er de story. I done seen Venus sharpin' dat ax, an' I seen 'er guvin' de stockin' — dat same stockin' she kep 'er money in, ye unnerstan', sah, an' nebber so much 's let 'er lawfil husban' peek enter hit — she guv dat stockin' ter Miz Dee Medecis fo' ter keep fo' Miz Legree. She done so; I seen 'er. I wuz present, pussonly, myseff, unner de bed. So, sah, habin' de bes' wishes fo' Venus, dough she hab no right notions 'bout de duties er de weaker vessel, I 'se done gone ter Mr. Bal'win, an' he won' go dar 't all, but send de sogers."

"But she may resist the soldiers" —

"No, sah; pardin', sah; I 'se guv 'em de key er de back do', an' w'ile Venus she darin' dem in front, torrers kin come in behin'. I hates ter argy wid Venus; she am so prege-deeced like, she ain't reasonable. So ye be so kin', please, sah, gib my bes' respec' ter Venus, an' tell 'er I forgibs ev'yt'ing, an' I 'se done

gone fo' good; an' ef we all don' meet up en dis worl', I hopes ter meet up with 'er en de bright worl' above, whar dey ain't no merryin' nur givin' up merryin' an' de wicked cease deir trubblin' an' de weary am at res'."

Here Ambrose took out a white handkerchief, and, so to speak, dusted his eyes with it; then made a deep bow and departed.

"Venus is well rid of him," thought Johnny; "now, how much of that was a lie?"

But for once Ambrose had spoken the truth, as Johnny discovered when he got to the Legree gate, for he could see blue-coats on the piazzas, and he met Venus with an axe on her shoulder. She answered his questions with inscrutable composure: "I'se gwine speak Mr. Bal'win," said she.

"Do you need an axe for that? Venus, I believe you mean to kill Baldwin. You think then Mrs. Legare will get the place back, but she won't; it will go to Baldwin's relations. You *never* will get it back that way. And they will hang you, my poor friend, and what will Miss Nannie do without you?"

He had touched the right chord. The axe trembled on the huge shoulder, then all at once it was hurled to the ground, and Venus was crouching beside it, rocking herself to and fro in bitter anguish, but never uttering a sound.

Johnny did not know how to interrupt this savage, silent grief. At last she arose, arranged her dress decently, and said very quietly: "Marse cap'n, Miss Nannie done los' ev'yt'ing — her paa, dem two boys, an Marse Renny he killed up, too, las' monf; an'—an' my li'le w'ite baby, de Lawd done take 'er fo' ter be happy 'way fum we all. Marse cap'n, I cayn't lebe Miss Nannie by 'er lone! No, I 'se hab ter stay. Oh, how come my witch mammy nebber l'arn me no witchin'? All I knows dess haff er cuss. W'at de wuth am *haff* er cuss? Deb-bil lebe ye most 'tickleres' p'int."

"Never mind, Venus," said Johnny; "we 'll get it without the devil."

He quite meant what he said, and, on leaving Florida, he used all his own and his family's influence, which was not small, in Mrs. Legare's behalf; but it was a time when both sides were stripping themselves of the superfluous moralities for the last fierce tussle, and he could do nothing. Then he wrote to Venus, proposing that *she* try to buy the place of Baldwin. An answer came promptly enough, from Mrs. De' Medici; Venus had tried, but Baldwin would n't sell the place for less than five thousand dollars.

Johnny was not too good to swear a little over that letter. "Wait a little," said he, "we 'll get the place cheaper than that."

His interest was so thoroughly roused that he went down to see Venus as soon as the end of the war left him at liberty. He found her established in the Minorcan's house, and selling preserves at such a rate that she had to hire an assistant. She had fitted up a room with the old furniture of Mrs. Legare's chamber, and kept it always ready, down to the nosegay on the table. "Kase I knows not de day nur de hour, and I'se keep ready fo' my Miss Nannie."

Baldwin was as obdurate as ever. This was the state of things when Miss Nannie came back. Johnny was still in town, but so changed was she that he did not know her. He had gone out that day with Venus to "the place." Walking through the ruined gardens, and viewing the deserted and dismantled house, it seemed to him a type of the whole South. Perhaps, because he knew all the little domestic details of the life of the past owners, and because he had, in a way, entered into their joys and their sorrows, a profound sense of the contrast and the desolation made Johnny melancholy. He recalled the radiant creature whom he had seen, with a kind of pang. And it was at this moment that he saw a thin, elderly woman, in rusty black draperies, come slowly and wearily down the avenue. She was quite near him before he perceived that really she

was a young woman, whose hair had turned gray. Venus was just behind Johnny. She screamed, and ran towards the lady.

At the same time a man came around the house. The man was Baldwin. Johnny saw that the lady spoke to him. "Do you live here, sir?" said she.

"No, ma'am," answered Baldwin, civilly; "but I own the place."

"You — own — the — place?" gasped she. "How did you get it?"

"Bought it of Uncle Sam. It was sold for taxes."

Then Venus caught her mistress about the waist, and, supporting her with one arm, shook her free fist in Baldwin's face.

"Oh, ye debbil!" she yelled. "Dis am Miz' Legree!"

"Hey?" said Baldwin. "Well, I don't guess ye'll expect me to say I'm pleased to meet ye, ma'am."

"I thought I was coming home, Venus," said the poor lady.

Johnny could n't bear any more.

"Confound it all, Baldwin," said he, "let's see if we can't settle this. You say you will sell for five thousand; I'll give you your price."

"No ye don't, colonel," said Baldwin. "I ain't sellin', and what's more, I ain't going to

sell. The land will rise, and I kin afford to wait. An' if I was sellin', d—d if I'd sell to you."

"You cur," said Johnny, "if you say another word I'll thrash you." He looked as though he might not wait for the other word.

"An' I holp him," said Venus.

"No, Venus," Mrs. Legare cried. "No, sir; you are kind, but it would be useless; I know the man now. He was an overseer on my uncle's plantation, and was sent away for cheating. He went into the Yankee army afterward as a sutler, but he had to leave because he would get provisions for the people here from the commissary and then sell the provisions."

Baldwin ground his teeth, but it was not easy to deny this with Tindall looking on, so he forced a sickly kind of laugh, saying: "You're a lady, ma'am, an' you kin talk an' I have to listen, if it is on my own grounds, but it's gittin' late an' I have to be goin'."

Mrs. Legare turned her back on him, not deigning to answer. Venus accompanied her mistress; but she rather marred the dignity of their departure by shaking her fists at Baldwin all the way to the gate, and screaming unintelligible imprecations, backing out, meanwhile, as if from a royal presence.

She informed Johnny, later, that she had

launched at Baldwin a curse of terrific power. "Dat same haff er cuss my mammy l'arn me," said she, "mek dat Bal'win squeal fo' sho, fotch de wuss sorter trubbel on him. Mabbe he git out dough, kase dey 's jess de fust haff. Mos' like gre't trubbel, deff, mabbe, come ter me, too, kase er meddlin' wid de debbil's tings. Dat ar's w'yfo' I done nebber cuss 'im befo'. I like fo' ter lib an 'see Miss Nannie. Dess see 'er, dat 's a satisfaction ter me."

This was after Venus had taken Mrs. Legare to her home, and when she was bidding good-by to Johnny, who must leave the town that night, having received a telegram from the North about business requiring his presence.

Venus wept as she blessed him and implored him to return soon.

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The decrepit old Spanish town was transformed into a fashionable "winter-resort" before Johnny saw it again. He stared discontentedly at the smart new shops and the huge wooden hotels which had taken the place of the modest hostelries of his knowledge. "Confound it, how they have spoiled the place!" thought Colonel Tindall.

Strolling along, he found himself at last in one of those lane-like streets which are interrupted by the plaza for a space and then go

crookedly on until they melt into the marshes beyond the town. He stopped before a house, such a house as used to be common as possible, but which was already growing rare. The pink plaster hiding the coquina front was richly mottled by lichens, chipped away, also, in places, showing the stone. It rose in a straight line from the sand (sidewalk the street had none), and was continued in a garden wall. The steep roof made an upward and forward slant over a hanging balcony, and some queer little dormer windows blinked out above. The door to the house was the garden gate. Over the brass knocker hung a sign — “Furnished Rooms.”

“Now, *this* is a decent house,” said Johnny. “By Jove!”

The exclamation was caused by the appearance of a gigantic negress on the balcony. She looked down, saw, clapped her hands together, and disappeared. In an incredibly short time she was below, kneeling before Johnny the better to embrace him, and blessing the Lord.

“De chari’ts er Isril an’ de hossmen darof,” shouted Venus, swaying Johnny backward and forward; “de rose er Sharon an’ de lily er de valley, praise de Lawd, O my soul, dis am you fo’ sho’, honey! De lamb, wid him same yaller ha’r, an’ lubly red cheeks de ve’y same — dess

fatter! Hallelooger! laws, laws — kin ye hole yo'seff stiddy, marse cunnel, dess a minit twell I res' my han' on yo' shoul'er 'n h'ist myseff hup — I ain't de figger fo' knellin', dat 's sho'."

Of course Venus would have him go into the house to Mrs. Legare, who received him with a cordiality amazing to the modest fellow.

"Laws, my baby," said Venus, "ye ain't s'pose Miss Nannie Legree an' me done forgit ye? We all 'members ye reg'lar en our ev'nin' supperclations, we does. An' dat ar check er ye done sen' me, I 'se got it safe en de stockin'. Miss Nannie, she guv de stockin' ter de bank fo' ter keep in deir big iron box" —

"But the check was for your law-suit — to get back your property," said Johnny. He sat blushing in the most extraordinary way, and thinking Mrs. Legare handsomer every minute. Gray hair? — well, what could suit those divine dark eyes better? Thin? — yes, to be sure; but the stouter Johnny grew in his own person, the slimmer became his ideal woman's shape.

Meanwhile, Venus answered in the fullness of her heart: "De 'serbs, dey pays fo' de lawin'. An' we rents rooms; sleeps 'em, don' eat 'em; an' we alls roomers don' make a mite er trubbel. An, de lawin' ar gwine on prosperin' an' ter prosper; be'n frow two co'ts a'reddy. We alls lawyer, he says ef we kin dess git

de 'session we'se git de propputty. Dey 's a right smart er folkses lawed bout deir propputty, an' some dey 's comperromised, but dat Bal'win he won' gib in — I lay de debbil holp him" —

"How about the curse, Venus?" Johnny could not resist asking.

He got a portentous roll of head and eyes together, and "Nebber you min' de cuss," said Venus; "hit come. Ain't he done los' de onlies' chile he hab? An' I know dis, he don' durst lib in dat ar house hisseff; lets it ter a po' cracker man fo' mos' nuffin', he so skeered."

Johnny soon found from Mrs. Legare that Venus was not misinformed as to the value of the possession of the property in a legal sense.

"Venus," said Johnny, "I think I see my way; I'll manage the cracker."

"Yes, marse cunnel," said Venus, in nowise surprised, "an' dis time, I lay de debbil holp *us*."

Johnny and Venus had resumed their confidential relations at once. He had explained that his long absence was caused by his being in Europe. "Wid yo' wife, honey?" said Venus, rather anxiously.

"I am not so fortunate as to be married, Venus."

"I 'lows 't war de lady dat am forternate,"

said Venus, simply. "Den you ain't merriad, an' Miss Nannie Legree am a widder? Singler! Singler! But ain't she dat sweet, marse cun-nel?"

"She certainly is, Venus," said Johnny, with rather a doleful smile, for he had begun to think that he was likely to exchange a few delicious days for a long heartache. "However, I'll get her place back," thought he, "then I can go."

The cracker was induced to move out by night, — how, Johnny best knew, — and that same night Venus and Johnny moved Mrs. Legare's furniture back into the house. They had unloaded the last cartload, and were standing in the hall, and Venus had chuckled to herself, "Got de debbil on we alls side *dis* time," when they both heard the same noise — the rapid thud of hoofs, as if a furious rider were galloping down the avenue.

Somehow, Baldwin had discovered the plot. "Let him come," said Venus, grimly, flinging the door open wide, "me an' de debbil kin match him!" Baldwin jumped off his horse and rushed at her. She had a candle in her hand, and by its flare her vast bulk loomed up like a black mountain. With one arm she caught the raging man by the shoulder and held him writhing and sputtering with fury, but helpless as a kitten in her grasp, while with

the other she slowly and impressively wagged the candle at him in the manner of a finger, saying: "I 'clar' I 'se 'sprised at ye, boss, mos' knockin' me down dat a way; clean ondecient!"

"You git outer my house!" roared Baldwin.

"Dis yere am Miss Nannie Legree's house," said Venus; "it ain't yo' house nebber no mo'. We alls got de 'session, and I 'se tell ye plain, boss, ef ye'se gwine on dis a way, 'sturbin' de quality an' tryin' ter faze 'em, I 'se trow ye down, right yere, an' sot on ye twell ye ca'm an' peacerful an' readdy go home. Fo' de Lawd, I will so. Ye heah me!"

Baldwin blustered something about wanting to talk to a man.

"Try *me*," said Johnny.

"I'll fix *you* to-morrer," snarled Baldwin. "If there's a law in the land I'll have it, and" —

But the rest of his threats were lost, for he turned on his heel, mounted his horse, and rode off, swearing.

"Bress de good debbil, fo' so much!" said Venus.

All the next day they expected him — an anxious day it was; but he did not come, nor did he come the day after, and so a week went by without any sign from him, until it was rumored about the town that he had fallen ill.

Then they said that his wife and a servant had taken the disease. Finally the oldest doctor in town reined in his horse to say a few low spoken words to Mrs. Legare on the street. The horse was jaded and the doctor pale; he had been riding in different directions, but all his patients had the same disease, and all had been with Baldwin.

“He went to Savannah and brought it back with him,” said the doctor. “When he knew he had it, he let people come to see him. Yes, ma’am. He has always been a curse to this town, but this is the worst of all, for it’s yellow fever sure as death.”

Mrs. Legare went home and warned her boarders. There were only three of them, the time being early in November. Two of them left the town that day. The third was Johnny Tindall. He flatly refused to stir unless he might take Mrs. Legare and Venus with him.

“But *I* have had the fever; there is no danger for me,” pleaded Mrs. Legare, “and the negroes don’t take it. Besides, I am a Southerner, these are my people, my place is here. But you, sir, why should *you* risk your life?”

Johnny looked at her, a longing that shook his heart rising in him, to tell her that it was because it would be sweeter to die with her, beside her, for her, as it were, than to live apart

from her. But he only said: "Well, it would be rather a scrubby thing to run off and leave you, don't you think?"

He was the stronger — he stayed.

The fever grew worse and worse. People shut themselves in their houses, so that it became hard to get nurses for the sick. It was such a new calamity that the townspeople were stunned. "There never was a case of yellow fever in the town before," they would repeat pitiously, as though there were some hope in their past immunity. Then they cursed the man who had brought this horrible mischief upon them. No soul would go near him, and the house where he and his wife lay sick was shunned like one haunted.

"Let them live or die as the devil pleased," the people said. So the weeds choked the garden, and the wind rattled the blinds, and the rain poured in through an open window, while the few passers-by only crossed themselves and hurried on.

"Hit am de cuss," said Venus, with solemnity, not without a touch of gloomy pride, "de cuss dat I cussed?"

One day, a lady, passing on the other side of the street, observed a little girl mount the steps, and called to her, "Don't go in there, dearie; they have the fever?"

“ Oh, yes, ma'am, I must! ” answered the child, looking back brightly. “ I take care of them; I'm their little girl! They're awful sick.” Before the lady could cross the street she had entered the house.

“ Oh, the poor little thing,” thought Mrs. Legare. “ Who can she be? They have no children. And oh, how like she is to Tessie! ”

She told Venus about the incident. “ 'Clar' dat ar muss er be'n dat li'le gyurl dey done 'dopt,” said Venus, “ an' dey does say dat debbil am right petted on her. Dar now, Miss Nannie, you lay down an' res' or I'se tell Marse Tindall.”

Already Johnny had come to play an important part in Mrs. Legare's thoughts. In those days of selfish fear and frantic misery brave souls were drawn together. She admired Johnny's clear head and his military cheerfulness, so independent of outside gloom. She would not let him assist her directly in nursing; but he was invaluable outside, the right hand of the mayor, the commandant of the post, and the doctors. Yet she was conscious, all the time, of a vigilant watch over her health and comfort, and of a hundred unobtrusive attentions. “ Nobody but Venus could take such good care of me as you do,” she said once, gratefully.

Venus, of course, was a tower of strength.

“Laws,” said she, “I wisht I cud mek my-seff inter ten folks, den I mought go ’roun’! Say, dough, Miss Nannie, dar am one pow’full comfort er dis yere hour er ’fiction — dat ar ole Bal’win ain’t gwine to bodder we all no mo’, kase his gwine die, sho’. Miz’ Dee Med-éecis, she say she go by ’is ’ouse dis mawnin’, an’ she heah dat ar’ li’le gyurl, po’ ting! moanin’, an’ moanin’ rale pittible, an’ dey wuz clean deserted, an’ dat debbil he come to der winder, an’ he wuz lookin’ like deff, an’ he h’ist down a tin pail, tied on a sheet tored in two, an’ he done holler on Miz’ Dee Medeecis, how he ’d gin ’er ten dolla’ fo’ ter fotch ’im a pail er watter fo’ ter guv dat ar baby. ‘I know ye hates me,’ sezee, ‘but de chile nebber hurted ye.’ So Miz’ Dee Medeecis she got ’im de watter, an’ she ’lows by dis time dey’s all drinked deyseff ter deff, mos’ like — laws, honey, whar ye gwine?”

Mrs. Legare did not look at the negress as she replied that she was going to the Baldwins.

“Oh, my heavenly Marster,” screamed Venus, “de chile am gone clean ’stracted crazy. Dar, honey, you sot right down an’ leff dat ar old debbil die comf’uble; he’s got all dat ar watter!”

“Venus,” said Mrs. Legare, “I *must* go. I have been thinking of it for two days. I said if the child got sick — Oh, Venus, the poor little child, the baby that looks like Tessie!”

“Well den,” said Venus, sullenly, “if dat chile hab be sabe kase she favor Miss Tessie, den I ’se de one ter do it, an’ I does it. I goes an’ nusses de w’ole batch er dem. I knowed dat debbil git eben wid me, foolin’ wid he cusses!”

She was as good as her word, and in spite of Mrs. Legare’s expostulations went to Baldwin’s within the hour.

She faithfully nursed them until the fever turned and the new nurse secured by Johnny arrived. Then she went home. It is doubtful if, in their weakness and delirium, they quite realized why she was there.

The night of her return was rainy, and when Johnny looked in on Mrs. Legare, the next morning, he found Venus wrapped in shawls over the fire and Mrs. Legare busy with medicines.

“She ought not to have come out in the rain last night,” said Mrs. Legare; “she was tired and heated, and she has caught cold.”

“Laws, Miss Nannie,” said Venus, feebly, “I cudn’t holp comin’, I wuz dat ’omesick. I ’se cl’ar sides myseff wid j’y, gittin’ back ter

my own fambly ag'in. An' dis yere cole am dess de spite er de debbil, nuffin else on earth."

Just a week from that day, John Tindall, sitting with his bowed head on his hands, vaguely conscious of the fragrance of roses all about him, heard the knocker on the front door clank and clank.

The man outside was Baldwin. Mrs. Legare opened the door. She was looking worn and pale, her eyelids were swollen with weeping, and her eyes had the glaze of recent tears, but they blazed into their old brilliancy at the sight of him and his words. "You see I've come, ma'am, like I said. Now, I want to know how soon you'll be ready to move out!"

He was prepared for everything except the one thing that happened. She drew aside her skirts; she said, "Come in!"

"Well!" said Baldwin; but he came in, stumbling a little because of his weakness and the dark hall, and she, leading, opened the parlor door.

Tindall had jumped up, and Baldwin saw him standing behind some large dark object. Looking more closely, he perceived the object to be a coffin, and within the coffin, above the flowers and the soft wool draperies, was the peaceful mask which had been Venus's face.

Mrs. Legare laid her hand on the folded hands which would never work for her again.

“There,” she said, very quietly, “there is my last friend. She lies there because she went to help you. She came home from your house and *died*. Now, if you will, turn me — and her out of our home!”

Baldwin’s hat was still on his head, he took it off; his face was changed, and he leaned against the wall.

“Damn it all,” said he, hoarsely, “I ain’t goin’ to turn ye out. She came and nursed us, true enough. I know now. Look a here, she’s always be’n tryin’ to buy it—I *give* her the house.”

He stumbled back through the hall. They heard the door swing — not loudly.

Johnny came and stood by Mrs. Legare.

“Dear,” he said, “don’t say your last friend, because that can’t be while I am alive. I want to tell you what Venus said to me just before she died. You know, dear soul, she believed she was dying on account of that foolish curse. ‘The devil will kill me,’ she said; ‘but I don’t care, I got the house for Miss Nannie. I give it to her and you. Keep it for her, won’t you, Marse Tindall, for you love her too?’ Truly, she *has* given you the house now, and if — the

other — Oh, my darling, I love you with all my heart; don't send me away!"

She was crying bitterly; but when he took her hand she did not repulse him.

"It is Venus gives it to me," he said.

WHITSUN HARP, REGULATOR.

PART I.

POLLY ANN SHINAULT was mending the Clover Bend ferry-boat. The ferry-boat was nothing more than an old scow, leaky and unruly. Lum, Polly Ann's husband, meant to mend it that morning; but Lum was scouring the bottom after a stray mule. So Polly Ann had pounded the head of the hatchet on the handle — they have a natural tendency to part and go their separate ways in a Southern yard — and was patching the leaks herself. They said at the Bend that Polly Ann was “pow'ful handy.” She was a handsome young woman. Some blending of French and Spanish blood from the earliest Arkansas travelers had given her the mass of purple-black hair under her man's hat, the clear olive of her skin, her velvet black eyes, and delicate profile. Her eyelashes were long and thick and curled at the ends. Long eyelashes and small features are not uncommon in Arkansas faces. Did Polly Ann smile, she showed a rarer beauty, even little

teeth, white as milk. But Polly Ann seldom smiled, being a silent, serious creature whose own husband felt a trifle in awe of her. Her primitive repairs completed, she straightened her bent shoulders, clasped her hands behind her neck, and looked about her. When she stood she was tall and erect as a young cypress.

Her eyes spanned the Black River flowing at her feet, and took in, without noting, the whitewashed walls of the mill, the store, and the score or two of houses that go with an Arkansas cotton plantation. The time was early in November. The cotton was ready for picking, and flakes of white spattered the brown fields. The yards were frowsy with stalks of jimson weed and withered grass. The great cypress forest shut in the cleared space like a wall. The scene was monotonous, yet about it was something sombre and vast, a loneliness that the presence of the few low-browed houses seemed to mark rather than lessen. A little spiral of smoke drifting above a chimney here and there, some pigs dotting the sandy road, a few riderless horses patiently drooping their noses against the fence rail before the store, were the only signs of habitation. Behind Polly Ann lay the canebrake and the forest. The water mirrored the Shinault cabin with its one wee window and "stick and dirt" chimney.

During the war (not so far back by many years, that November day, as now) escaped prisoners used to hide in the canebrake. After the war runaway convicts from the stockade at Powhatan found shelter there sometimes, and then the cane would be crushed by the leaps of panting hounds; and many a night had Polly Ann shuddered, listening to the dogs baying, and picturing the wretch crouched among the sodden grasses.

Plenty of grim traditions hung, heavy as its own miasma, over the cypress swamp. Not a rod away was the bare spot, dented by cypress trees, where Old Man Bryce's cabin stood until the guerillas murdered him and his wife and burned their bones under their home. A whole company of guerillas had dangled from the sycamore limbs for that murder. The shapeless green in front of the store had been the scene of bloody quarrels. Down by the river bank, on the little knoll which the spring covered with wild flowers, Bud Boas had killed his partner. Boas was tried and acquitted; but his own conscience was not so lenient as men. As the slain man fell he had flung out his hand, touching Boas's cheek. Ever since, the unhappy slayer had been haunted by a touch. He would wake from sleep, screaming that he felt the hand. At his work, at home, at camp-meetings

even, where he would go in the vain hope of eluding his persecutor, the tortured man might spring up, wildly rubbing his face, and rush away, or fall in convulsions horrible to see. From no other cause than this ghostly touch, he had seasons of drinking hard, but it was said that liquor could not blunt his senses.

Boas's cabin was near the Shinaults'; and this afternoon while Polly Ann stood looking, she saw his limp figure in butternut jeans slip through the store doorway and creep along the bank. Years ago Boas had been an exceptionally tall and strong man, bringing a backwoodsman's stature, muscle, and ruddy tan from the Tennessee mountains; now his stooping shoulders and lank chest matched the sickly pallor of his face, with its hollow cheeks and restless, faded eyes.

Approaching the shore, he hailed Polly Ann with a "Whoo—op!" She got into the scow and pushed off. She paddled as easily as an Indian. Meanwhile Boas had been joined by another man, who drew the boat up on the beach, saying, "How 's all, Polly Ann?"

Polly Ann had not seen him until he spoke; and she flushed a little, as though from surprise.

"*You* come back, Whitsun Harp?" said she.

"Got back yistiddy," the man replied. He had a slow full voice, with a kind of severe

melody in its cadence not in the least like the high-pitched Arkansas drawl. Whitsun Harp was a head shorter than Boas. He wore a blue flannel shirt, and brown jean trousers tucked into high boots, all quite whole and clean. His compact, powerful frame was not of the Arkansas type any more than his dark, square, resolute face; yet, in the phrase of the region, he had been "born and raised on the Black River bottom."

At first glance, one could see a resemblance between him and the young woman, — not a likeness of feature, but of manner and expression; both had the same direct, serious gaze, the same slow speech, and the same proud bearing. When Polly Ann reddened, Harp grew paler. The men stepped into the boat, and Polly Ann greeted Boas: "Howdy, Mr. Boas?"

"My health's mighty triflin'," answered Boas; "someway, I'm puny all the time; sorter mis'ry in my ches'; some days I feel pow'ful weak, caynt skeercely walk. Ora she 'lows she'll send fer Dr. Vinson, but I don't guess it's no use."

"Doctors does good sometimes," said Polly Ann.

"Say, Polly Ann," said Harp, "I heerd tell you all 'd los' a mewl."

"Lum's went ayfter it," said Polly Ann;

“we missed it Monday, an’ we waited an’ waited fer it to come back, an’ it did n’t, so Lum he ’s went ayfter it. Lum ’lows it ’s stole, he ’lows some cotton-picker toled it off.”

“Looks like,” assented Boas; “them cotton-pickers is mighty ornery folks.”

Harp asked a few questions, short and to the point; and when the boat landed he drew Polly Ann aside, while Boas stooped to mend a dilapidated shoe with a rag.

“Polly Ann,” said Harp, “I come to see ye. I’ll tend to yo’ mawl. Ye know I ar’ turned regerlater.”

“I ’ve heerd tell on ’t.”

“Wa’al, hit ’s so. I aim to mek these yere pyarts mo’ decenter. Polly Ann, this yere ’s a turrible mean kentry, drinkin’ an’ sw’arin’ an’ fightin’ an’ devilment er all kin’s o’ goin’ on! An’ the chil’en bein’ raised to drink an’ fight an’ die jes like we uns; Polly Ann, hit ain’t right! An’ thar ain’t no need fer it to be, neether. I be’n in other settlements. They ain’t like we all; they ’ve got brick chimbleys, an’ battened heouses, an’ a school-heouse whar they kin hev preachin’, stiddier hevin’ it in a loft like we all. We mought, too, but we ’re so triflin’ we caynt mek a riffle.”

“Looks like,” agreed Polly Ann politely.

“Yit how to holp it? I’d lay an’ study the

hull night through, Polly Ann, studin' 'beout hit. The mo' I studied the wuss it looked. Wa'al — it war ayfter ye taken up with Lum an' war merried, hit come preachin' Sunday, an' I went ter preachin'. 'T war the best out at preachin' I ever heerd. All 'beout calls. God called some on us one way an' some a tother, but we wuz all called ter his sarvice. An' I says ter myself, 'Lord, how ar' I called? I ar' the bes' blacksmith in the bottom, but I cayn't talk wuth a shuck.' An', Polly Ann, a voice said back, cl'ar's a boat-whistle: 'Whitsun Harp, ye caynt talk folks decent, but ye kin lick 'em decent. They need a regerlater yere mo'n a preacher.' I jes growed cole all over, fur I war walkin' all by my lone self en the bottom, not a critter 'reoun' 'cept hoegs. 'Lord,' says I ter the sky, 'they'll kill me shore, if I turn regerlater an' lick 'em. An' w'at'll maw do then?' So I went home turrible troubled in my mind. Polly Ann, w'en I got home maw was in one 'er spells, an' afore sundown she war dead. *Thet* war the Lord A'mighty's answer to my hesitatin'. Ayfter thet I went ter wuk. Fust I sarved notice on them men thet got drunk reg'lar Saturday nights at the store. Then I licked them thet persisted in wrong-doin'. I licked ole Skirey fer oppressin' the pore; an' I evened it up by

lickin' two niggers thet wud n't do a fair day's wuk fer their wages. I licked Sol Looney fer fightin' with his wife, an' I licked a man right smart fer stealin' — thet ar 's 'beout all."

"Law me," said Polly Ann, admiring him, "but, Whitsun, don' they fight ye? Folks don' like ter be licked."

"They 've got to fight or be licked — one. Mos' times I ar' too spry fer 'em an' take their knives an pistils 'way. They did shoot a shoot at me wunst, but hit missed."

Polly Ann's dark eyes were shining through a mist of eagerness, and her lip quivered as she said: "But they mought hit ye!"

"Yes," said Harp quietly, while something gentle and unusual relaxed his features, a look at once patient and sad; "wa'al, ef they did n't kill me, I wud go on jes' the same, an' ef hit *did* — I ain't no wife nur babies ter grieve ayfter me, an' I reckon the Lord kin tek keer Clover Bend some other way."

Polly Ann drew a deep breath. "Looks like 't wuz a call!" said she.

"'Tis a call, shore," said Harp solemnly; "I waynted ter tell ye so's ye wud know the truth 'beout it, folks lyin' so ginerally. It's no differ ter me 'beout the res', but I waynted *you* ter know bekase — we uns played tergether w'en we wuz little tricks, an' I allus tole ye everythin', ye remember."

She remembered. Perhaps she remembered more, for her cheeks grew red, and her brown fingers were clasped together so tightly that they made dents in the knuckles.

“An’,” continued Harp very gently, “ef I shud hev ter do suthin’ thet ye mought n’t like, hit’s ’kase I hev ter an’ not my seekin’ — bein’ called. Ye’ll consider thet thar, Polly Ann?”

“I don’t guess ye’ll ever do nuthin’ ye don’ hole ter be right, Whitsun Harp.”

“Thankee, Polly Ann,” said Harp. He almost timidly touched her hand, holding it for a second in a loose clasp. Then he strode away without a glance at Boas. The latter rose directly and joined Polly Ann.

“Did Whitsun Harp say onythin’ ’beout Lum ter ye?” said Boas.

“Naw,” said Polly Ann; “w’at fer shud he?”

Boas seemed to have a difficulty in speaking; he had to clear his throat twice before he could say: “Wa’al, fact is, Polly Ann, he’s heerd tell — wa’al, lies ’beout Lum like he be’n too much ter the store an’ dances an’ sich like tricks, an’ Whitsun he ’lows Lum’s truffin’ an’ — he’s warned him.”

“Warned — Lum?” cried Polly Ann.

“Said like he’d lick ’im, ef he don’ quit,” replied Boas with primitive directness. He laid

the tips of his fingers on her sleeve, and his face grew earnest. "Fer the good Lord's sake, Polly Ann, don' ye let Lum mad Whitsun! Nary man en this bottom kin stan' agin him. Ye know Steve Elder, how big he is? He stole a pa'r boots at the store. Whitsun he seen it, but he never let on; but w'en this yere Steve comes fer his acceount he fin's at the bottom, 'One pa'r boots, so much. Putt down by Whitsun Harp.' W'en he read thet ar he never opened 'is mouth. Jes paid. He knowed he cud n't stand up agin Whitsun." All the while Boas talked he was scanning Polly Ann's face to see the effect of his words. "Thar war a circus feller too. He brung a mighty ornery, mean show to the Bend, and Whitsun warned him not ter show thet ar show agin; but he pitched 'is tent an' wuz marchin' 'reoun' in front, a puttin' on doeg, w'en up comes Whitsun, an' he says, 'Did n't I warn ye not ter show yo' durned ondecient show yere?' sezee. An' he slapped up thet ar feller an' flung him 'cross a log an' pulled his belt 'reoun' an' yanked out 'is pistil an' flung hit cl'ar'n' 'cross the road an' licked thet ar circus feller tell he hollered. An' ye 'member ole Skirey thet he giv the bud to, spiter him an' 'is two sons. He knocked the big un down, an' the little one lit a shuck mighty spry. An' who killed the mad doeg

with a hammer? An' who held the wild hoeg by the tail tell Mark Lady cud stick 'im? — them two men off their hosses en the cane, an' their guns empty! Naw, naw, Polly Ann, don' let Lum mad Whitsun! An' 't ain't lickin's thet 's mos' ter fear." His woeful eyes turned from Polly Ann's face in a fleeting, shrinking, indescribable glance toward the river bank — "they mought git — ter — fightin'!"

"I ain't feered fer Lum ef they do," said Lum's wife haughtily.

But no sooner had the well-meaning threatener gone than she ran into the cabin, shut the door, and flung her proud head on the table in a passion of tears.

Lum Shinault came home by moonlight. His wife had saved his supper, and he stretched his legs out beneath the white oil-cloth with a sigh of content.

"My, my, my!" said Lum in his soft, pleasant voice, "talk 'beout cookin'! Polly Ann, ye allers git thar with both feet. Fried pork an' sop an' taters an' pie an' light bread! Onythin' mo' ter foller?"

A faint smile lifted the corners of Polly Ann's mouth. She knew her gifts, and appreciation is sweet. "I reckon," Lum continued, "hit meks a differ eatin' en a purty room. This yere 's a right purty room, Polly Ann."

He looked about the room, and she looked at him. The room was poor and bare enough, with its log walls and uneven floor; but the big cotton-stuffed pillows on the bed shone out of the dusk; there was a clock on the rude mantelpiece, a red cushion on the black and gilt rocking-chair, and a log thicker than a man's body was blazing in the fire-place. The flames, rather than the sickly gleam of the grease lamp, lighted the room and Lum Shinnault's face. He was of low stature and slight, and in the firelight he made one think of a terra-cotta figure, he was so all of a color, hair, skin, and clothes all the same, whitish-brown. But he had sparkling brown eyes and a sensitive mouth that could shut firmly. "Did ye fin' the mewl?" said his wife.

"Not a hide nur a ha'r er the blamed critter," answered Lum cheerfully, "but I seen a big gang er turkeys. Reckon I shot one, but I cud n't fin' hit."

"Whitsun Harp wuz yere; he 'lows he 'll fin' the mewl fer us."

Lum whistled. His meal being finished, he got up and stood close to his wife. She had knotted a scarlet handkerchief about her throat, which suited her olive skin and black hair. Lum slid his arm around her waist. "Ye ar' turrible good-lookin', Polly Ann," said he

smiling half wistfully; "I sot a heap er store by ye."

She neither accepted nor repulsed the caress; merely stood, her hands clasped before her, absently gazing at the fire. His arm fell; but in a second he put out his hand again, to finger softly a stray lock of hair.

"An' Bud Boas, he was yere too," said Polly Ann; "he 'lows ye 'd bes' be keerful kase Whitsun's mad at ye. He 'lows yo' too triflin'."

"An' *I* 'low Whitsun Harp's too meddlin'!" cried Lum, opening his brown eyes angrily. "W'at bus'ness ar' hit er his'n? I don' rent er him. 'Tain't his plantation. To my notion, Whitsun hed orter be run off this yere place!"

"He 's did a heap er good yere," said Polly Ann — was it the firelight, Lum wondered, that made her cheeks so red? — "Look at the fightin' an' drinkin' he's stopped! Thar ain't be'n a man killed yere sence he turned regerlater."

"Thar 'll be one killed mighty quick, though, ef he don' quit projickin' 'roun' an' lickin' folks permiscus'."

Polly Ann laid her hand on her husband's arm, looking down at him, for she was taller than he. "Lum," she said solemnly, "he is *called*, Whitsun is. They caynt hurt him till his work's did. Don' ye say anythin' agin 'im, Lum."

Lum's frown turned into a broad grin. "Oh, laws! called ter lick folks? Ef thet ain't the durndest trick!"

"But he is," she insisted; "he's hed signs an' tokens. Don' go agin 'im, Lum."

"Wa'al, honey," said Lum easily, "I ain't purportin' ter go agin 'im. He's too big a b'ar fer me ter tackle."

Polly Ann turned away abruptly. Lum looked after her, all the light-hearted carelessness gone out of his face. "'Pears like I jes cud n't please her nohow," he thought while he busied himself clearing the table. Lum had the habit of helping his wife about the house; he had acquired it helping his mother, Lum's father being "triflin'."

At the same time Polly Ann was thinking: "He won' fight hissself or run enter no danger, but he'll sick the rest on, an' him stan' by." She hardly noticed how deftly Lum wiped the dishes and brushed out the room. "Be ye too tired ter listen ter a leetle music, honey?" he said when he had put the broom behind the door.

"Naw," said Polly Ann, trying to smile, "I don't guess I'm ever too tired fer music."

Faint as the smile was, Lum welcomed it and took down his violin with a brighter face.

He played a long while; at first, simple mel-

odies of the plantation and the camp-meeting; then, as his thoughts drifted into other memories, they took their own shape in music rude as his life, but weird and sad like the cypress brake. Lum was born a musician. He had a wonderful ear but the scantiest knowledge, most of which came from a strolling violinist who had the swamp fever in Lum's cabin and left a book of songs for payment. Lum learned the songs by heart. They were as commonplace as possible, but the ideas, worn shabby through the handling of generations, were new and splendid to Lum. Why not? They could not have been any fresher to him if they had just been discovered. They lifted and adorned his notion of love. They aided the ever-increasing power which his wife exercised over his imagination. He thought of her in their language, which had a dignity and charming tenderness quite lacking in the speech of his birthplace where a man "took up with a girl and married her," making no more ado about it; the song words were so pretty and kind-sounding, it was like kissing a girl to say them. Lum was too shy to say them himself. Once he ventured to call Polly Ann "darling," instantly blushing up to his eyes. She did not seem to mind, neither did she seem pleased. It was the way in which she always met her husband's

affection. This passive endurance of his love had come to have a kind of terror for Lum. He could not understand his wife. To go back to the beginning, — as Lum did to-night on his violin strings, — he had married Polly Ann out of compassion. He was in the field when Old Man Gooden fell dead in a fit of apoplexy. He helped Polly Ann carry her father into the house, and he witnessed her passionate, dumb agony. Lum had a soft heart, unfettered except by a few rustic attentions to a certain pretty widow on the plantation, Mistress Savannah Lady. When he beheld Polly Ann's desolate condition his heart melted.

“Nary kin nigher 'n the Sunk Lan's,” mused Lum, “hit's turrible hard. An' she sot sich store by her paw, an' he muched¹ her so. They sorter kep' ter theyselves, too, I don't guess they wuz the socherbel kin'. Nary un waitin' on 'er neether, 'less hit ar' Whitsun Harp. Ef he don' merry her, I reckon I hed orter. 'T ain't no mo'n neighborly.”

Whitsun making no sign, he carried out his intention.

Polly Ann assented gravely, almost silently, to whatever he proposed. Nothing was easier than to rent a cabin and a pair of mules from

¹ To much; Arkansas for to pet, to caress, to make much of.

the Northern men who had bought the plantation, and settle down to raise a crop.

Polly Ann, after the first outburst, put her grief stoically away and only worked the harder. Polly Ann's father came from the "Sunk Lands," that mysterious region created by the great Lisbon earthquake, — an island in the swamps, half the year cut off from the world, forgotten except by a few traders. Until she was fifteen she had lived the solitary life of the people and grown up in their Indian-like reticence. When she was fifteen, her mother died and her father took her to Clover Bend. She was now twenty-three years old, and she had been married hardly five months. Lum was a man of the lowlands, who inherited French instincts of sociability and liked idling about and gossiping. He took his new relations lightly at first, but soon his wife's stronger nature fascinated him. She awakened all the ardor and tenderness in him, this beautiful, silent, haughty, patient woman. "She ar' fairer nur the flowers," quoted Lum from the songs; "an' she's got a right smart er sense too," he added in the vernacular. He declared his wife's superiority with much frankness. "Law me," said he to Boas, — it was a few days later, and they sat on the store counter, indulging in the unpretending luxury of brown sugar and crackers, — "law

me, Polly Ann 's wuth a hull crap er *me*! Ye 'd orter see the plunder she 've bought, pickin' cotton" —

"Wa'al, then," interrupted Boas, dropping his customary mild, plaintive drawl to a lower key, "w'y fur be ye so possessed ter cavoort 'reoun' with Savannah Lady?"

"Me!" exclaimed Lum.

"Yes, jes *you*," repeated Boas with an anxious gaze into Lum's scarlet face. "They 'lows like ye taken up with 'er. Boy, ye had n't orter be agwine on thet way! Nur ye had n't orter come yere, fiddlin' an' carryin' on, an' yo' wife ter home, by her lone self, studyin' an' grievin'" —

"Polly Ann don' grieve," said Lum rather sullenly; "leastways she don' grieve ayfter *me*, nohow. In co'se I mean," he went on quickly, "she ar' grievin' fer her paw."

"In co'se," said Boas. There was a pause.

"An' ez regardin' Mistress Lady," Lum said finally, giving the full prefix with dignity, — on ordinary occasions one would only say "Mis'" in Arkansas, — "we uns wuz raised together an' natchelly have frien'ly feelin's. But ef ye ar' 'lowin' thet I even her or ary nother lady ter Polly Ann ye ar' a long sight outer yo' reckonin', thet 's all. I knaw I taken her ter the singin' school the fiddler hed; but Polly

Ann never 'd go thar ter singin', kase — wa'al, Polly Ann jes natchelly cayn't sing, cayn't cotch a tune. An' ez fer me goin' ter the store an' drinkin', I disremember how often I done come yere; but I know I never got drunk onywhar, not the least bit on earth. But I ain't purportin' to be goin' yere ter fiddle nights, Bud Boas, never no mo'. Folks ain't got no call ter say I don' ruther stay by Polly Ann than onywhar nelse."

"Thet 's so," said Boas. "I knawed they wuz lyin'." Lum did not tell Boas that he only went to the store because he thought that Polly Ann did not care to see him home, and his heart was sore. He could not say that, since it would seem like complaining of Polly Ann. But Boas's caution set him thinking; gossip must be loud to rouse that haunted soul from its dream of pain.

"Thet thar 's w'at Whit Harp done heerd, dad burn him," growled Lum, "an' blame my skin ef I don' b'lieve thet ar Savannah ar' jes foolin' with me fur ter tol on Steve Morrow." Which it happened was precisely the case. Savannah wanted to marry the stockman, Morrow, and she used Lum to help her, not at all sorry to make Polly Ann jealous, if she could, as well as Morrow. "Ain't thet thar jest like the critter?" said Lum with per-

fect good humor; "it's a rig on me an' Steve, though." Yet he felt a queer resentment against Harp — a resentment not diminished by the sight of his lost mule munching cotton stalks in his own field. "Whitsun foted 'im," Polly Ann exclaimed. It seemed to Lum that she spoke as though proud of Harp's success. Lum, the best-tempered man on the plantation, ground his teeth. "I sw'ar I hate thet thar Whitsun Harp!" he was thinking.

The next time that he saw Harp was mail day. Twice a week a rider brought the mail to Clover Bend. The post-office was in the store, just as the court-room was, whenever the majesty of the law was invoked or a jail needed. The store had a wide platform the right height to serve instead of a horse block. Savannah Lady rode up to the platform as Whitsun came through the door. She was a pretty, kittenish, fair little woman, and her hair, which was of a lovely reddish-brown color, had a trick of escaping in little ringlets and blowing round her white neck. After all, there was no great harm in her; but to Harp she was the embodiment of all that was dangerous and alluring in woman.

Lum was on the platform so near that common gallantry required him to help her alight. Somehow she stumbled, so he held her for a second by the elbows. Harp, black as night,

watched her recover herself, laugh, blush, and flutter into the store. He strode up to Lum. "Lum Shinault," said he in a low tone and very deliberately, "ef ye don' quit yo' ornery triflin' ways I 'll lick ye!"

"Then I'll kill ye, shore's death, Whitsun Harp!" Lum gasped, choked with passion.

Whitsun only gave him a steady gaze and turned on his heel.

Lum felt himself despised.

A week went by. Polly Ann was conscious of a change in Lum. Though kind as ever, his shy caresses were no longer offered. He worked harder and seldom went to the store, "an' he jis' studies the plum w'ile," said Polly Ann.

One day Mrs. Boas came over to ask Lum to get some quinine and whiskey at the store for Boas. "He had one er 'is spells,"—so the poor wife always named Boas's fits of terror,— "an' he run out en the woods an' got soppin' wet an' cotched cole an' 'pears like hit gits a leetle mucher all the w'ile."

After Lum was gone Polly Ann bethought herself of some corn which should be ground, and that it was grinding day at the mill. Like the store, the mill was a versatile and accommodating establishment, ginning cotton, sawing wood, or grinding corn with equal readiness. So saddling the big gray horse, which was at

once her dowry and her inheritance, she led him to the ferry and paddled boat, horse, and woman across the stream. The Clover Bend ferry was deserted, but it was accustomed to desertion, being conducted on Southern principles: if you came when the ferryman was away you must wait until he got back, that was all.

Polly Ann saw Lum's wagon-box boat on the sand, and riding up the bank she perceived Lum himself walking through the cypress brake.

"Cypress Swamp," or the "Black River bottom," is like a dry river channel winding through the higher land. When the spring overflow comes the lustrous green water rushes among the tree trunks, and the high land becomes a multitude of islands and peninsulas; but most of the year the channel is dry, and in autumn the cypress boughs spread a soft russet carpet on the ground; the hackberry, maples, live-oaks, and holly-trees which mingle with the cypress splash the foliage with splendid hues, the sunlight filters through the branches and prints shifting shadows of the vines masking the thorn-trees, or turns the red berries into dots of flame. Then the cypress brake is beautiful. But Lum Shinault was not thinking of its beauty. He was walking slowly, his head sunk between his shoulders.

“Studyin’!” said Polly Ann.

Lum looked up. The silhouette of a horse’s head had fallen across his path. A sun-bonnet was bent over the mane. The bonnet hid the woman’s face, but that ringlet of dazzling hair, floating under the cape, could only belong to one person. Horse and rider stopped. So did the footman. His shadow spread out gigantic on the ground. Then both shadows were blended together as if in an embrace. Did Polly Ann grow angry? Not in the least; she could see too well.

“W’ats got Savannah Lady?” said she; “looks like Lum was guvin’ ’er w’iskey an’ holdin’ uv ’er.”

This, indeed, was what he was doing. For once there was no guile about Savannah’s acts; Lum had served her turn. Young Morrow had spoken, and she was on her way to buy her wedding finery when she was seized with a chill; but she still rode on, clinging to her horse’s neck, until she met Lum. He gave her some whiskey.

Now by an evil chance, at this moment, Whitsun Harp must needs enter the scene on a gallop. He saw the shadows, he saw the bright head on Lum’s shoulder, the little hands clutching Lum’s arm.

A shower of cypress boughs whirled in the

air; a pawpaw branch snapped, wrenched away by a furious hand; and Lum lifted his eyes to see Whitsun's face.

"I tell ye, yo' mistaken!" shouted Lum.

"It's too late for talking now," said Whitsun, deep and low.

He jumped off his horse and caught Lum by the throat. The smaller man was like a baby in his grip. Lum, writhing and struggling, in an impotent fury of rage and shame, hardly felt the blows. Suddenly the hand at his throat released him so suddenly that he was hurled to the ground; he heard his wife's voice, shrill with anger: "Whitsun Harp, w'at ye doin' ter my man?"

He sat up, his brain swimming, specks of fire and blood floating in the air; but there was Whitsun standing empty-handed, and Polly Ann's face over the gray's head.

"I did n't aim ye shud ever knaw on 't, Polly Ann," said Whitsun, "I cud n't holp it, hit hed ter be did."

"I'll never fergive ye en this worl', Whitsun Harp!" said Polly Ann.

Lum put his hands on the tree near him and got to his feet. He leaned on the tree and steadied his choked and shaking voice enough to say, "Look a yere, Whitsun Harp, I'll kill ye fer this."

Harp did not glance toward him ; he took one step forward as though he would speak to Polly Ann, but at her gesture of repulsion he turned silently and mounted his horse. On horseback, he reined in his horse, and looking at Polly Ann, said again, "I cud n't holp it," before he galloped away.

Savannah was shivering and crying.

"Hit *you* ary lick, Savannah?" said Lum.

"Naw, naw," sobbed she. "Oh, Lum, oh, Mis' Shinault, 't wa'n't my fault! I war jes sick. Whitsun's heerd lies on me 'n' Lum. I'm goin' ter be merried ter Steve Morrow nex' week. Fer the Lord's sake, don' tell 'im; he wud n't never speak ter me agin! I done my best! I pulled Whitsun's arm."

For all his misery, Lum burst into a bitter laugh. "Muster hendered Whitsun a heap, *you* holdin' on," said he. "You go 'long home, Savannah, an' don' be skeered er we uns tell-in'; jes tek keer ye don' let on nuthin' yo'self—never min' w'at happens!"

Something in his face checked her answer; she was scared, and glad to ride away.

The husband and wife were left alone together.

Lum looked at Polly Ann, who was very pale. "Ye come jes in time, Polly Ann," said he.

"I wud n't o' b'lieved ye'd a taken it, Lum

Shinault," said she bitterly, "with yo' knife on too. Pull yo' belt 'reoun'!"

Mechanically, Lum put his hand to his belt, which had been twisted so that the knife was in the back. "I done forgot 'beout the knife," muttered Lum, reddening; "thet ar's a favor-yte trick er Harp's." Then, in a second, he added: "I ain't goin' ter tek hit, Polly Ann."

She said nothing.

"Ye don' b'lieve me," cried Lum.

"'T ain't no use talkin'," said she wearily.

"I'll hev it out with 'im. Ye 'low I'm a ornery, triflin', pusillanimous" —

"Whar 's the use callin' yo'self names?" interrupted Polly Ann. "I don' wanter yere no more 'beout it. Reckon Boas 'll waynt 'is w'iskey, onyhow. Thar 't is un'er the gum-tree." Lum looked at his wife with imploring eyes and quivering mouth; at that moment he was longing to fling his arms about her and sob out his shame on her breast. Poor Lum's grandfather was a Frenchman.

Polly Ann did not look at him, but went on arranging her bag of corn; all Lum could see was the profile of her sun-bonnet — there is nothing sympathetic about a sun-bonnet. "Bes' git on ter the mill ef I waynt a pone er bread ter-day," said Polly Ann. "Be back ter dinner, Lum."

She rode on a little way and stopped. "I'm goin' ter hev a plum good dinner fer ye, Lum," she called back.

"Thankee, Polly Ann," said Lum. He watched her until the trees hid horse and rider. "Polly Ann 'lows thar ain't no troubles men persons cayn't cure with eatin' an' drinkin'," said he; "drinkin'," — he eyed the whiskey bottle lying at the foot of the gum-tree, — "naw, thar ain't ony comfort fer me en thet ar. I'm en a hole, an' thar's jes one way outen hit. No good talkin' ter Polly Ann, she's sot. 'T wud on'y pester her. Oh, my Lord, ain't it hard!"

"I wisht I cud hev kissed her jes wunst," he said, after a while, "on'y fer ter say good-by. How soft her cheek wuz! An' thar war a little blue vein jes un'er the ear. Wa'al, hit won' mek no differ ter her, but I wisht" —

He walked on slowly until he came to the boat on the sand. He could see his own cabin. He remembered the day that he brought Polly Ann to it — his wedding-day. He crawled into the boat, lay down in the stern, and cried like a child.

PART II.

Polly Ann's good dinner waited in vain. Lum did not come. Yet she was sure that,

while at the well drawing water, she had seen his figure through the window. She blew the horn. She called at the top of her voice. Finally she went to the shed to see if the horse was gone. Gone he was, and there was a piece of brown wrapping-paper, such as they used at the store, tacked on to a log and directed to "Mistris Shinalt." She took it down, turned it over, and saw a single sentence, written in pencil, in cramped, careful letters: "Darling Polly an i taken your Hoss fer a Errant i wunt be bak your Lovin Husban. C. Shinalt."

"Law me!" said Polly Ann, "he mought hev come in, onyhow. An' the dinner's plum sp'iled."

She was wretched over the morning's work, but she did not feel alarmed, having no belief in Lum's courage; and when she discovered that the gun was gone, she merely thought that he meant to shoot squirrels.

But Lum was seeking other game. His errand was to kill Whitsun Harp. The smouldering jealousy and resentment of weeks had burst into a flame that was shriveling his heart. He had been beaten before his wife, his wife who valued strength and bravery beyond everything. And Whitsun, whom she praised because he was so strong and brave, had beaten him. How many times had she praised Whitsun to

his face. Like enough she had wanted the regulator all along, and had only taken up with Lum because Whitsun didn't speak — girls did such things Lum knew from the songs. Here was the secret of her being so quiet and sad, and of that queer way she had with her that made him feel farther away, in the same room, than he did thinking of her, miles off, in the bottom.

“I never cud much her like I cud t'other gells,” thought Lum; “I allus hed ter study on 't afore I cud putt my arm 'reoun' her waist. Reckon I sorter s'picioned, inside, thet it pestered her. Pore Polly Ann!”

It was like Lum to feel no anger, only compassion, for his wife.

“Hit's bad fer her too — turrible bad,” he pondered; “ef it's me gits killed up she caynt hev no mo' truck wi' him, an' ef it's him she'll natchally hate the sight er me! Wa'al, she won' be pestered with it; I'll go off on the cotton-boat afore sundown. All through this wide worl' I'll wander, my lone,” said Lum, his thoughts unaffectedly shaping themselves in the words of his songs. They did not cause him to waver in his purpose; he knew Polly Ann's notions of manly honor too well. Old Man Gooden shot a man once.

“Paw hed ter shoot him,” Polly Ann explained; “he spatted paw en the face.”

“An’ ef a feller spatted me, wud I hev ter shoot him?” Lum had asked, amused by her earnestness, for this was before he passed the careless stage of his marriage.

“Wud n’t ye waynt fer ter shoot ’im?” said Polly Ann, fixing her beautiful grave eyes on his smiling face.

“Wa’al, I shud n’t crave it,” said Lum.

“But ye wud, Lum, ye *wud* shoot him!”

“Mabbe — ef I cud n’t run away,” answered Lum, and he had laughed at her face over that speech.

He did not laugh now, riding with his bruised throat and aching shoulders, and the gun slung across his saddle-peak.

“Him or me,” groaned Lum; “hit ’s him or me — one! Thar ain’t no tother way!”

He was riding through the bottom lands above the mill. The entire bottom was like an innocent jungle with its waving green undergrowth of cane. Pigs were rooting under the trees, and the heads of cattle rose above the cane, turning peaceful eyes of satisfied appetite upon Lum’s reckless speed.

There was no reason for haste, really, outside the relief which motion gives to a perturbed soul, for Lum knew that Whitsun was buying a horse of a farmer up on the bayou, and would have to return by the same road. But he did

not slacken his pace until he came on a man riding more leisurely. The man hailed him, and he saw Boas.

“W’y, I wuz at yo’ heouse,” said Lum, “an’ Mis’ Boas ’lowed ye wuz en bed.”

“So I war,” said Boas in a weak, high voice, “but — I got up — I got up!”

“Toby shore, toby shore,” said Lum soothingly.

He saw the man could barely keep in his saddle for trembling, and that his features were ghastly; but Lum had the humblest Southerner’s innate politeness; it was not deemed good manners in Clover Bend to take notice of any thing singular in Boas’s appearance or conduct; there was one unhappy explanation always ready.

Lum, through his daze of anguish, felt a prick of pity for this miserable being who had done many a kindness to Lum’s mother in his unhaunted days. He stretched out his arm and supported Boas by the elbow.

“Oh, I’m peart enough,” said Boas; “I waynter tell ye suthin’, Lum.”

The younger man resigned himself with inward impatience to a slower gait.

“This yere’s a sightly kentry, Lum, ain’t it?” said Boas, gazing about him, “but I ain’t repinin’ ter leave it.”

“Be ye gwine ter Texas?”

“Farder ’n Texas, boy. Dr. Vinson was over an’ he tole me — naw, Lum, ye don’ need ter say yo’ sorry, I know ye ar. Ye be’n like a son ter me sence ever ye wuz a little trick an’ played with my boys. Ye wuz the least little trick er all. Ye ’member ’em, Lum, sich peart, likely boys they wuz, an’ they all died up an’ nary un ter home, peaceable like; Mat an’ Tobe drowneded, an’ Mark throwed from his hoss. All on ’em ayfter — ye know w’at — all three en one year, ev’ry chile we’d got, Ora an’ me. Hit war hard ter endure, Lum, turrible hard.”

“It war so,” said Lum.

“Wa’al, they ’re all on ’em gone. An’ I’ll be gone, too, afore long. I ain’t repinin’. Lum, ye never heerd me talk on ’t; I cud n’t b’ar ter speak; but, somehow, ’pears like ’t wud ease my min’ a bit ter tell ye suthin’ er my feelin’s, Lum; ef I hed n’t er be’n so mortal skeered er meetin’ up with Grundy, I’d a killed myse’f a long spell back, I wud so. I’m wore out. Boy, ef so be yo’ tempted ter fight, ’mind yo’s’e’f er me! I killed Grundy Wild, killed ’im fair too; but, Lord ferguv me, I done went enter thet ar fight *aimin’* ter kill. I ’low thet war how he got ’is holt on me. Fer he’s never lef’ me sence. Fust I wud n’t guv in. ‘Be thet ar all the harntin’ ye kin mek out?’ sez I. But hit

kep' a comin' an' a comin', never no differ, tell hit crazied me, Lum!

"Nur thet war n't the wust on it. The wust war bein' skeered the hull w'ile, 'spectin' an' dreadin' never no tell.

"Did ye never hev a door a squeakin', Lum? A squeakin' door ar' a mighty little trick; 'tain't nuthin', ye may say; but ye 'll be a settin' an' thet thar door 'll squeak an' stop, an' then it 'll squeak agin, an' then not, an' then squeak an' squeak an' squeak tell ye git up, sw'arin' mad, an' shet the door. *Lum, I cud n't shet the door!* I taken ter drinkin', but I cud n't git so drunk thet I 'd not feel thet thar cole han' er his'n a flap flabbin' on my face. Hit's wore me out. At las' I jes give up; an', my Lord! 'peared like his soul fa'rly enjoyed trompin' on me, r'arin' an' chargin' like 't wuz a wil' hog! Oh, my Lord! my Lord!" The man shook in his saddle with the horror of his recollections. But he controlled himself enough to go on, though the sentences came in pants. "Then I 'membered — thet thar tex' — an eye fer an eye an' a tooth fer a tooth. Hit come ter me — cud I on'y swap a life with the Lord fer Grundy's — then it mought be he wud tek Grundy offen me an' — let me die en peace. I don' ax no mo'." He stopped, gasping and coughing while Lum held him. Lum was

deeply touched ; he was not a whit moved from his intention ; but he was touched, and he felt a sombre sense of comradeship, thinking, “ Mabbe I’ll know how ye feel, termorrer.” Boas continued : —

“ An’, Lum, w’ile I war studyin’ an’ prayin’, ‘ Lord, let thy pore sinful sarvint wipe the blood-guiltiniss offen his soul an’ not hev ter die skeered ! ’ Lum, I heerd them Case boys from the hills talkin’ outside. They wuz come ter borry my bateau. They wuz ayfter Whitsun Harp, bekase he’d prommused the big un, Ike, a lickin’ fer beatin’ Ole Man Bryce outen ’is cotton. They wuz ’lowin’ ter pick a fight wi’ him an’ kill him. I peeked outer a crack an’ seen ’em. Two hed guns, an’ all three hed knives. So I tole Ora ter tell ’em we ’lowed ter use our own boat. But they got a bateau farder down, an’ I seen ’em en the river, so I hed Ora row me over an’ I borried Looney’s hoss, it bein’ so easy — an’ I ’m agwine ter warn ’im. The river twists so, an’ thar’s a right smart er groun’ ’tween Young Canes whar he ar’ an’ the water, I kin’ git thar fust, easy — Say, little tricks, w’at ye bellerin’ fer ? ” The road had passed a little clearing, made in Arkansas fashion by burning down the trees. The cabin in the centre had no window, and the door was open, showing three particularly dirty

children who were all crying together. The oldest stuck a shaggy white head out to say, "Hit 's fer maw?"

"Whar 's yer maw done gone?"

"She's done gone 'ith Mr. Harp fer ter see Aunt Milly Thorn, kase Uncle Tobe Thorn done lick er hide offen er," said the child, evidently repeating an older tongue's story. "I sended three men ayfter er, but she ain't come back, an' we uns is hungry. Oh dear, maw! maw!"

"Hush, hush, honey," said Boas, trembling, "whar did the men come from?"

"They come from a boat, an' they axed fer Mr. Harp, an' they said they wud fotch maw back in the boat. Will ye fotch maw?"

"Ter Tobe Thorn's," screamed Boas, clutching Lum's arm; "d'ye onnerstan', Lum? Thet's 'cross the big bayou, the heouse on the bank; they kin cut 'cross en the bateau an' the road goes 'way off t' other side. I cayn't do hit, Lum, the Lord don' mean ter parden me! An' pore Whitsun" — shaking Lum's arm in his uncontrollable agitation — "Lum, mabbe its 'tended fer you ter save 'im! .Yo' hoss never makes a blunder. Ye knaw the bottom, an' ye kin ride through the brake fast — fast!"

Lum turned a dull, deep red; he felt himself suffocating with passion; he saw his re-

venge lost and with it everything else. Yet he could not wrench his last hope from this hunted, desperate, dying creature. And Boas had been kind to his mother.

“Lum, ye will do hit,” pleaded Boas; “I knaw ye don’ bear no good will ter Harp, but, God A’mighty, he’s a human critter, ye won’ see ’im murdered, w’en ye kin save ’is life! Ye cayn’t be so hard-hearted! Oh, Lum, do it ter save *me*, ter holp *me* outen the hell I be’n en fer five year!”

“Yes,” said Lum, “I’ll go fer *you*, Boas.”

His face was as white as Boas’s, but Boas could not see; he pushed his helper by the shoulder to hurry him, panting, “Go ’long, then, fast, fer God’s sake! God bless ye, boy, ye’ll save two men stiddy one. How he rides, an’ I useter ride thet way” — The children cried, and he went to them; Lum was out of sight in the high cane.

The young fellow rode furiously. Beneath that pleasant green sea lay pronged roots and logs and ugly holes. Thorn-trees stretched out their spiked limbs, wild grape-vines flung their beautiful treacherous lassos on the breeze, and pawpaw saplings, stout enough to trip a horse, were ambushed in the cane. Through them all crashed the brave gray, leaping, dodging, beating down the cane with his broad chest,

and never slackening his speed. It looked like a frantic race through the wilderness, but, with the woodman's instinct, the rider leaving the perils below to the beast's sure eyes was really guiding him on an invisible course.

At last Lum drew rein before another clearing. He could see Thorn's cabin and women in the "gallery," and riding along the shore, nearer and more distinct, the figure of a man on horseback, plainly Whitsun Harp.

Lum galloped up to him.

The regulator carried pistols in the holsters of his old cavalry saddle; the barrel of one flashed out as Lum approached.

"Ye ain't no call ter be skeered er *me!*" shouted Lum. "Not *this* time. Look out fer the Case boys — thar, on the bateau! They're a comin'!" —

"Shucks!" said Whitsun. He gave Lum a long and keen glance which apparently satisfied him, for he addressed himself at once to the more imperative danger. In fact, the Case boys were landing. Ike, the tallest, he to whom the "lickin'" had been promised, stood up in the boat, as the keel grated on the sand, and hailed Lum: —

"Say, Lum Shinault, moosey outer yere, we hain't no gredge agin *you!*"

"W'at mought ye hev come fer, then?" said Lum sarcastically.

“Ter guv that thar — regerlater a show ter lick Ike, ef he darst,” called the second brother.

“I darst,” Whitsun replied with his usual composure; “jes come on over!” The brothers consulted; then Lum was hailed again: —

“Lum Shinault, git outen the road!”

“The road’s free,” said Lum. “Yo’ mighty brash orderin’ folks outen the road!”

“Dad burn ye, be ye on his side?”

“Looks like,” replied Lum indifferently; “onyhow, ef ye waynt a fight ye kin hev hit!”

“They all won’ fight,” said Whitsun.

Nor did they. The third Case boy (while the others were bending to their oars) yelled: “A man so mean’s you, Whit Harp, hed orter be shot ’twixt the cross er the gallowses, an’ we’ll do hit yit!” And the big Ike informed Lum that he was “let off” on account of the women in the cabin; but not one of them lifted his gun. Safe out in the river, they threw back a shower of threats and oaths, but nothing more solid.

“They’re pusillanimous cusses,” remarked Harp. Then he drew nearer Lum, looking actually embarrassed. “I cayn’t mek you out rightly, nohow, Columbus Shinault,” said he.

“Naw,” said Lum scornfully, “nor I cayn’t

mek myself out. Look a yere, Whit Harp, I come enter this yere bottom ter *kill* you.”

Whitsun nodded gravely, making a little affirmative noise in his throat, exactly as he might have done to a remark about the weather.

“An’ I *wud* hev killed ye or be’n killed up myself — one, ef I hed n’t met up with Bud Boas. ’T ain’t no differ *how* he stopped me; he done hit, he sent me on his errant ter ye — ter warn ye; an’ w’at’s mo’, so longer’s he lives, ye ain’t nuthin’ ter fear from me. But w’en he done gone — look out!” He would have wheeled his horse, but Harp caught the rein, saying, “Stop! w’at sorter trick’s all this? W’at fer did ye stop fer Bud Boas? Did he — did he skeer ye with his ghost?”

Lum laughed harshly, in sheer bitterness of soul: “A dozen ghosts wud n’t a stopped me. I don’ hole by ghosts nohow.”

“Then w’y did ye go?”

None of us are above wishing to be justified, and there is a peculiar zest in overturning our enemies’ false notions of us. Lum never would have proffered an explanation, but there may have been a grim comfort in letting Whitsun see his real self. He replied quietly, “I come ter help Boas.”

“How’d thet help ’im?”

“’Kase he war purportin’ ter warn ye his-

self. He 'lowed ef he cud jes save some un's life — a sorter swap like fer the one he taken, thet ar ghos' w'at harnts 'im mought quit."

"Did the ghost say so?"

"I don' hole by ghosts, I tell ye. Naw, it's jes a idy. So's the ghost a idy, ter *my* min'. But hit's plum fixed in 'is head jes strong's scripter. An' I reckon 't wull be like he 'lows 't will be — so. He 'lowed ef he cud save ye from bein' killed up er hev me, then the ghost 'ud let up an' he cud die in peace."

"Toby shore. An' hit war thet away? An' thet thar's w'y ye won' fight me — kase the life won' be saved then an' the sperrit mought cum back?"

Lum shrugged his shoulders: "I guess."

Whitsun's stolid face worked as he cried: "Blame my skin ef I kin mek ye out onyhow! Ye ain't no sich feller like I wuz 'ceountin' ye ter be!" The blood rushed to Lum's forehead with a sudden sense of the uselessness of this late recognition, a sudden fury of pain. "Ye hev foun' hit out too late, Whitsun Harp," he cried; "ye shamed me afore Polly Ann, an' ye shamed her too, lickin' her husband jes be-kase ye wuz the bigges' an' stronges', an' ye wuz too dumb ter see thet thar triflin' critter, Savannah, war jes sick with a chill, an' I wuz guvin' on her w'iskey."

“An’ was them lies ’bequt you an ’er?”

“Ax *her*,” said Lum, overcome by irritation; “I don’ want no mo’ truck ’ith ye, Whit Harp, w’ile Boas is ’live. Let go!”

“Jes er minute mo’, Lum. I ain’t agoin’ ter fight with ye ayfter this ev’nin’. An’ ef I done ye wrong I’ll ondo hit yit.”

The hand on Lum’s bridle dropped, and the gray leaped forward; Lum’s farewell words hurled behind: “Ye cayn’t ondo hit; all ye kin do ar’ ter fight me, an’ ye *shell*!”

“Ef I mistaken him,” muttered Whitsun, who hardly seemed to hear, so absorbed was he in his own train of thought, “ef — how *cud* hit a be’n — me bein’ called?”

Boas was waiting at the cabin. He thanked and blessed Lum, but the poor fellow’s heart was too sore to be thus eased. He must go back to Polly Ann, who despised him. It never occurred to him to try to lift himself a little in his wife’s opinion by telling the story of the afternoon; he felt too sure that Polly Ann would not believe in any real intention of his to fight Harp, and would think that he welcomed any excuse. If only the Case boys had fought, if somebody’s blood, no matter whose, had been spilled! “Gells is allus a cravin’ fer folks ter be killin’ each other,” mused Lum. “Polly Ann wud feel a heap

pearter ef I hed a fust-rate tittle ter a ghost er my own. But now I never'll hev no show, not the leas' bit on earth!"

Polly Ann received him with great kindness, saying nothing of the spoiled dinner or the delayed supper and twice-made coffee. After supper she herself brought him the violin. But he put it aside, saying: "Tek hit 'way, I don' feel like fiddlin'!" He had scarcely touched his supper. "Ye feelin' puny, Lum?" said Polly Ann timidly. He only shook his head and went out, forgetting his hat. Her kindness jarred on his sick soul; this morning he had yearned for it because this morning he had a conviction that she would not despise him long or grudge him, afterward, a last caress. But now — "I'm so low down en her min' she cayn't holp pityin' me," thought Lum. Degraded in his own eyes and in hers, and uncertain how long before Savannah's giddy tongue might be released from the fear that tied it and make his humiliation the latest joke for the store, Lum's whole nature seemed to collapse. He shunned the Clover Bend people; he even shunned his wife, spending days in the woods shooting, or picking cotton, and taking a lunch into the field. At night, supper over, he would go out and be gone until late. Many a night did Polly Ann

pretend to be sleeping when Lum stepped softly across the floor. He never had been drinking; and he did not cross the river, for Polly Ann, always watching at the window, could see that the boats were not moved. One night she followed him. All that he did was to wander restlessly among the hills. She saw him make wild gestures; once she heard a groan. Then she crept back to bed and cried, poor woman, whether for him or for herself, who knows?

She began to be frightened. She saw Harp at a distance, and once he crossed the river and paid a long call on Boas; so that she did not connect any possible remorse with her husband's gloom. How could she imagine that he was ceaselessly and poignantly regretting his not being a murderer?

The only place where Lum was anything like his old self was in Boas's cabin. Boas was dying, but very peacefully. The visions which had tortured his life away were gone. He had no more dread of them. Thanks to Lum, he told his wife. He told her nothing else, but that was enough to arouse her gratitude. She would not pain him with questions, but she thought no harm of questioning Polly Ann. "D'ye 'low Lum done seen Grundy an' druv him 'way?" she asked in tones of awe. "Law

me, Mis' Shinault, but he mus' hev grit!" Grit? — poor Lum! But Polly Ann, who was superstitious, did have a vague and appalling theory that in some way Boas might have transferred Grundy to Lum. Yet, were she right, it was not natural for Lum to take such evident comfort in Boas's society, going there every day, and taking his violin, although he never lifted the bow at home.

Boas had little to say; what he had was about the time when his lost boys were children. He would lie for hours, quite patient, quite content, watching his wife at her simple tasks or hearing Lum play. He often smiled. It was a pathetic sight to see how this man, who had not known peace for so long, seemed actually to revel in mere immunity from dread. "'Pears like I cud n't git enough er jes restin'," he would say. He suffered very little physically. "It is n't so much that his lungs are gone," the doctor had said; "all his organs seem used up. It's more a death from exhaustion than anything else."

November passed. Early in December Boas died. Lum saw him only a few hours before the event. He had never alluded to the past horror, but to-day he said: "Lum, I be'n havin' a cur'is dream. 'Peared like I war haulin' logs alonger Grundy Wild, like we useter. An'

we uns war hevin' sich a pleasan' time. Hit war purty weather, an' we uns did n't. 'pear ter hev' no bad feelin's 'twixt us, an' Grundy he war a laffin' an' pokin' fun, an' me, I war laffin', too, kase ye know them tricks er his'n an' quar contraptions, an' nary un 'membered nuthin' er thet ar bad time. I war a laffin' w'en I waked up. Lum, we uns war right good frien's wunst, an' hits quar but I ar' a feelin' them ole frien'ly feelin's now agin. Hit 's like the res' war jes a bad dream. I ain't skeered no mo' er meetin' up with Grundy, Lum."

Not long afterward he fell asleep, and he may have wakened with Grundy, for he did not waken in this world. There was a great gathering at the funeral. To this day the widow talks about it with doleful pride: "'T war the vurry bigges' an' the gran'es' buryin' the Bend ever seen. A hun'erd an' sixty-two, big an' little, looked at the co'pse. I ceounted."

Whitsun Harp came to the funeral. It so happened that when Lum first saw him they were both standing at the grave. The open grave was between them. Polly Ann saw Lum's moody countenance brightened by a fierce light. Harp did not seem to see Lum or any one; his composed and melancholy gaze went past their heads over the forlorn little field with its rail fence and high gray grass waving

above the unmarked mounds. The services ended, the people slowly walked down the path which their own footsteps had made through the grass. Polly Ann kept close to Lum. He edged himself up to Whitsun. They spoke together in a low tone, but Polly Ann had the ears of an Indian; she caught two fragments of Lum's sentences: "Nuthin' *now* ter hender," and "Down en th' bottom, by the little bayou."

There were people with the Shinaults as far as the ferry, and afterward there were the widow and two cousins to escort home. One of the cousins, intent on having a comfortable gossip about the dead man with some one not too near him for free discussion, returned with Lum. So she gave Polly Ann no chance to see her husband alone, and was still rocking and talking in the black and gilt rocking-chair when he came in and took down his gun. "I'm goin' fer a shoot, Polly Ann," said he. He had crossed the threshold, but he came back and kissed his wife on both cheeks, before the cousin. The cousin giggled; but Polly Ann remembered that he had not kissed her before in three weeks. I fear that her visitor found her an ungracious hostess. The instant she was free, she ran to the shore. Lum's boat was gone, but Boas's little boat had been left near the ferry;

in this she rowed over to Clover Bend. At first she hesitated on the other shore, but presently she ran at the top of her speed. She had heard a single shot. "Thar wud er be'n *two*," her white lips kept muttering; "thar wuz on'y one!"

She ran past the mill, past the pasture, down into the swamp. It was the same cypress brake through which Lum had ridden with Boas, three weeks before; but it was another scene to-day. One of the wood fires, so common in autumn, had shorn the ground of the green cane and all the undergrowth that hides the weirdugliness of the cypress roots. Now, bared of every tender disguise of vine or moss, the hideous things, in their grotesque and distorted semblance of human form, seemed demon dwarfs crouching over their fires; while the cypress knees bore an uncanny resemblance to the toes of incompletely buried giants. Out of this huddle of monstrous shapes rose the cypress-trees, unmarred by knot or branch until high, high above a rider's head, some slim and erect like stately young maidens, others of enormous girth, brother giants to those that the earth refuse to cover. Some were as smooth and glossy white as dead bones. The fire had eaten out their life. Charred logs were tumbled over the ground, and the cypress boughs were

ashes whence rose a cloud of smoke under hurrying feet.

Polly Ann ran on farther and farther into the ruined forest. She could see the shining of water. A log had fallen across the road. No, O God! it was no log, it was a man, it was Whitsun Harp lying on his face, shot dead from behind.

Another woman might have screamed. Polly Ann only knelt down beside the man who had loved her all his youth, and very gently turned his face to the sun.

He who so seldom smiled now wore a pleasant, dreamy smile on his lips. The murderer had taken such sure aim that death did not even interrupt the murdered man's thought.

Then, at last, Polly Ann understood her husband. This was what he was studying.

Without a moan or cry her body swayed forward like a broken tree and fell beside Harp's. But she did not lose consciousness; she knew the voice that called her name, and she staggered to her feet. Lum was standing in the road, his face ashen white and his gun shaking in his hands. She ran to him with a great sob and threw herself against his breast.

"Run! run!" she gasped, "they'll cotch ye! Tek the boat; the river's bes'!"

"Fer w'y must I run?" said Lum. Though

he was so agitated, so excited, he seemed rather like a man overcome by some unexpected sight of horror than one who fears for himself.

“ You ”— began Polly Ann ; she clutched the barrel of his gun. It was cold to the touch.

“ Ye hav’ n’t fired hit off ! ” screamed she.

“ Naw,” said Lum, “ I see ye weepin’ over Whitsun Harp ; ye ’low *I* killed him ? ”

“ Ye looked so — skeered ! ”

“ I war skeered — pow’ful skeered. Kase, Polly Ann, I lef’ home ’ith my min’ sot on killin’ thet thar dead man, but I did n’t do hit. Hark’ ter me, afore him lyin’ thet away ye don’ b’lieve I cud lie. Lemme tell ye the hull truth.” Then he told, with the conciseness of strong emotion, how Boas had saved him in the first place, and how, as long as Boas lived, he could not renew his attempt. “ But, ter-day,” said he, “ I war free agin. I cud show ye I war a man’s much ez Harp. I spoken ter him at the buryin’.” — He shuddered. — “ I ’p’inted this yere place. He tole me ter come ter the store fust, an’ then ef I wanted he’d come yere. I done wen’ ter the store. And *he* war thar. Afore ’em all, he stepped up an’ begged my pardin’. ‘ Mr. Shinault knows w’at fer,’ he says, an’ then he thanked me fer ‘ savin’ ’ on his life — he putt hit like thet — an’ tole the hull story. ‘ An’ now,’ sezee, ‘ I don’t guess ye keer fer my

comp'ny down en the bottom.' Then he holes out his han', an' I taken it, an' he said, 'Ye won' keep no gredge agin me no mo', will ye, you nor yo' wife?' an' I said 'Naw,' an' he went away, an' I never seen him agin tell I seen *you* settin' by him, an' him dead. Polly Ann, ye *do* b'lieve me."

Polly Ann was sobbing, but she nodded. "Abe Davis, he war with me, but he went on the high road, an' I come down yere fer a shoot so I'd hev some squirrels to tote home. We heerd the shoot, but folks is allus shootin' in the bottom. We mought er cotched of 'em ef we'd come straight down: I don't guess they'll ever catch 'em now. Thar's too many ter s'picion."

Lum judged rightly. Among the dozen men who had cause to hate Whitsun, Justice (a somewhat unwieldy personage in the bottom) never could find enough evidence against any one to take action. Whitsun's murderer was never punished, to Clover Bend's knowing; he was never even pursued.

Lum knelt down as Polly Ann had done by the dead man's side; he looked up at his wife with love and pity beyond his expression. "Yes, he's done gone shore, dearie," he said slowly; "I wisht he warn't. He war a better man nor me."

Polly Ann only sobbed.

“Wud ye — wud ye like ter — ter say good-by ter him afore I holler on Tobe? I’ll step over yander ter look fer ’im.”

Then Polly Ann looked up. She read his thoughts.

“Lum,” said she, “come yere!” He came.

“Ye ’low thet I set store by Whitsun, too gre’t store, mor’n I done by *you*?”

“He war yo’ kin’, honey, I don’ meanter-ter trow it up agin ye — ye ’lowed I war triflin’.”

“Lum, Lum, don’ say the word,” cried she, “*don’t!* I don’ know how ter tell ye; but ’t waz *you* allus, allus, even w’en ye hed n’t nary thought fer me an’ wuz waitin’ on Savannah Lady. I fit agin hit, I done my bes’ ter brung my min’ ter Whitsun, fer he — he axed me an’ he war so good, so brave, the bes’ an’ faith-fulles’ — but I cud n’t do it, kase my min’ war so sot on you. An’ then we uns wuz married, an’ ye did n’t set no gre’t store by me fer a right smart. An’ I wuz so lonesome, an’ paw war gone, an’ I grieved. An’ then w’en ye sorter — sorter began ter hev a — a differ en yo’ feelin’s I war frettin’ an’ takin’ on bekase ye war n’t like Whitsun, an’ kase ye wud let ’im dare ye an’ prommus ye lickin’s an’ not tek it up. Oh, Lum, I war a fool, but ’t war allus you. *Whitsun* knows it war allus you.”

“Yes, honey, yes, my darlin’, I onnerstan’,” said Lum softly, gathering her into his arms with a full heart. In that supreme moment they both forgot all the world but themselves.

But Whitsun, lying in the sunlight at their feet, was smiling still.

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